

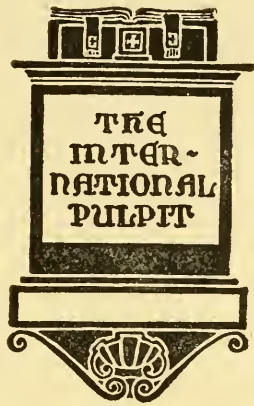




BX 7233 .C33 C5
Campbell, R. J. 1867-1956.
City Temple sermons







CITY TEMPLE
SERMONS

CITY TEMPLE SERMONS

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BY

R. J. CAMPBELL, M. A.

of London



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY
(*June*)

THIRD EDITION

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 63 Washington Street
Toronto: 27 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 30 St. Mary Street

AN OUTLOOK

THERE are not a few persons who maintain that the day of religious enthusiasm is past and gone for ever; that men are becoming increasingly secular in interest and outlook; and that faith has given way before the broad light of reason. This opinion is freely expressed both in the study and in the street; but, if we interpret the signs of the times correctly, the facts are against it, and in favour of the hope of a revival of religious fervour, zeal, and power.

Some of these indications can be briefly stated. There is, to begin with, a somewhat different mood observable in the younger ministry of the evangelical churches. The intellectual sermon *per se*, itself a reaction against an unintellectual type of gospel preaching, is giving way to a more spiritual form of address which, without ceasing to be thoughtful, appeals to the spiritual instincts of the hearer and quickens the moral sense. Another sign is to be found in the attitude of the hearers themselves. With comparatively few exceptions, congregations do not ask either for scientific lectures, or literary theses, in the place of sermons. They do not seek ornate and pompous discourses on the one hand, or conventional platitudes on the other; but they hunger for something strong, and deep, and true, suggestive of heaven and holiness, and

the living, loving Christ. The more direct and simple the style, and the more rich and real the spiritual experience of the preacher, the more the people welcome the message. They crave the note of certainty.

Nor is this all. The world cannot live on negations and pessimisms for ever. We have had our period of criticism, analysis, and sweeping demolitions. Science has had her say, and revised her dicta more than once. Biblical criticism has, in some instances, almost reached the *reductio ad absurdum* stage. The fashionable mental mood has been, and perhaps still is, agnosticism. We even hear a shout of triumph from the side of those unaccountable people who desire to see religion discredited. But the shout is itself an indication in favour of the recrudescence of faith. History can furnish many parallels for it. But always in the history of Christendom, at the very moment when revealed religion has been declared to be dead and buried, God's prophets have arisen and bidden the dry bones live. History will repeat itself once more. Human nature can never long rest in a pessimism. Whensoever the spiritual faculty has, for any lengthened period, been repressed or obscured, it has always reasserted itself even to extravagance. Is it not the case at this very moment? The hearing obtained by Dowieism, Christian Science, and such-like, is an evidence of this, and a tacit rebuke against our feeble ways of setting forth the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But, above all, we may hope much from the prayer circles that are springing up in all directions throughout the land, with the avowed object of waiting upon God for a revival of His work. Such prayer cannot

fail, for God cannot deny Himself. Christ is more than ever the great necessity, and the one central hope for poor humanity.

There is some speculation as to the form which such revival may take when it comes. Some people say it will be mainly ethical, and less emotional than most previous religious movements have been. Others believe it will take the form of a quickened interest in social justice, a great awakening on the part of the Churches in favour of the poor, the unprivileged, and the oppressed. No doubt there is truth in all these suppositions, but, if we refer to history once more, we learn the lesson that all Christian revivals have begun in the reawakening of devotion to Christ, the Saviour and Lord. We may call this emotion, if we please, but it has taken precedence of all ethical enthusiasms and social readjustments; in fact, made them possible. Such was the revival of Francis, of Luther, of Wesley, of Moody.

It may be questioned whether ethical endeavour, apart from faith, has ever succeeded at all. The character it has formed, and is forming in our midst to-day, tends to be self-conscious and introspective; whereas morality at its highest loses sight of itself as its own object, and becomes devotion to a Divine ideal. A quickened spiritual life in the Churches, a recovered enthusiasm, a new sense of the presence of Christ as Deliverer and Lord, would set free grand social enthusiasms, and supply an ethical dynamic compared with which all others are feeble indeed.

For this we need the power of the Holy Spirit of God. We need not to pray for a second Pentecost. The Spirit once given is here for ever. We need con-

secrated men and women. Let us pray, and trust, and expect. If we have not faith enough, let us ask for it; if we are not sufficiently in earnest, let us humble ourselves, and entreat the Lord to give us to our Master. Surely He will hear.

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WHAT IS GOD?

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.—Hebrews i. 1-2.

He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

—Hebrews xi. 6.

PROFESSOR HAECKEL, almost the last surviving exponent of scientific materialism, says that God, Freedom, and Immortality are the three great buttresses of superstition which it must be the business of science to destroy. Of these three subjects the first is overwhelmingly the greatest, and we will address ourselves to the question "What is God?"

The passages chosen to guide our meditation not only state the question, but also the conditions upon which an answer can be expected, and has actually been given; for every man believes in God, even when he denies, as I shall endeavour to show. There is no quarrelling at the starting-point; those who ask the question, What is God? already believe that He is. The difference between the creeds of those who speak confidently about the nature of God, and those who speak hesitatingly, is less in what they respectively say than in what they do not say; it depends upon what we put into the meaning of that word of three letters,

which is the greatest in the English tongue. "He that cometh unto God" does believe that He is, and some believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Moreover, the highest spiritual experience rises above this, in maintaining that God, who is never within sight, but who from the beginning of time hath spoken unto men, hath in the last days spoken unto us by His Son; and when we have heard and seen the Son, the Christ in whom Christians believe, there is nothing more that we know or need to know in answer to the question, What is God?

I can imagine someone saying at this point, "Are you quite sure that we are all agreed about the being of God; is there no doubt about the question whether God is: have we nothing to ask but the question what He is?" My answer is, Undoubtedly I am right, and you yourself are my witness. There are at least three orders of mind, which represent three different ways of thinking about the fundamental questions of our being and our destiny—the scientific mind, the philosophic mind, the religious mind. In one of those three classes every man finds a place. The man of science may not be conspicuously in evidence, but the men trained under scientific methods are. Those who have been to school within the last twenty years know well that it is impossible to escape the habit of mind which is the result of inductive—that is, of scientific—reasoning. Then there are the men of philosophic temperament, who start by believing in mind. Whether aught else is real or no, they believe in the Mind that thinks the world. They believe in their own mind, they may believe in a Whole Mind greater than their own, but still mind. And the religious man would say, "I

believe not only in my own mind, but I believe in a Mind which is the source of mine; I believe not only in my own soul, I believe in the Oversoul. Moreover, I believe in an essential relationship between my soul and that Soul; the Father of my spirit is ever speaking unto me."

It is often said that a three-cornered contest is going on between the representatives of these three temperaments, and that in two of them at least at the present time the antagonism is more pronounced than it has ever been before. This question has been addressed to me recently, "Is not the rift between science and religion wider than it ever was?" Thank God, no! I am well aware that some of the exponents of science and some of the professors of religion conscientiously think that it is; but to me, on the contrary, the future is full of hope, because of this—that for the first time in the history of human thought science, philosophy, and religion have a common starting-point—the human mind, viewing itself as part of an ordered whole, or as one effect of a Universal Cause. All three, through their exponents, affirm God, if they affirm at all. Let us take the three positions *seriatim*.

The old materialism is gone; it is as dead as the first edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. To-day men do not think of atoms and molecules as being the ultimate reality. If Miss Marie Corelli were going to write "The Mighty Atom" over again, she would write it differently, or, if you will excuse an Irishism, she would not write it at all. The man of science has ceased to speak of materialism as the explanation of life and mind, although many are old enough to remember Professor Tyndall's famous dictum about that.

Modern science speaks of a Universal Substance which, if it be matter, is also mind, but may be neither. To the man of science God, law, and the universe are one and the same; to him, again, the universe is self-contained, self-explanatory, self-acting by its own laws. Again, the man of science no longer speaks about a dead world of matter over against a living world of men. These are not two, but one; there is no death, but only life. The distinction between the organic and the inorganic is going, or gone. Nothing is dead, all is alive, the light from heaven and the dust on the ground. The Universal Substance is one; ever in movement. Here it is a sob, there a song; here it is the mud on London streets, there the men who walk on it; here it is a vapour, there a prayer; yonder a mountain, here a Gladstone; but all the while the same Substance in myriad manifestation, never at rest, ceaselessly acting, in infinite forms. Did I say rightly at the beginning of this sermon when I affirmed that the man of science has his God? The Universal Substance is his God. He would say, All is God, and God is all. His quarrel with religion consists, not in what he says that the man of religion does not say, but in what he does not say that the man of religion does say.

Let me study the position of the philosophy of the moment. Until quite recently the system of philosophy which held the field was what has been called Consistent Idealism. Do not be afraid of the word—it is very simple, after all. It means no more than this—that every man, thinking about everything, starts by assuming his own mind and the validity of his own judgment. To be consistent he must not assume anybody else's mind—only his own. So that every one of

us, looking out on the rest of the world, might say, "I am; perhaps nobody else is; it may be that my mind is the only mind in the wide universe of things; it may be that outside of my being there is no being; everything that passes into my experience comes as a series of mind-pictures, passing in idea before my mind." That idealism has completely broken down. Common sense steps in and declares, though you cannot prove it, that there are other minds than yours—you are only one, a spark perhaps, of the Universal Mind. You can enter into relations, soul with soul, with others of whose being you can have no reasonable doubt. So Consistent Idealism has gone, just as Scientific Materialism has gone, and in the place of both we have now the Universal Substance on the side of science, and on the side of philosophy the Universal Mind.

What says the man of religion? His position will not take long to state, because we all know it. Everything which science has said so far I can say, you can say. God is all, and in all; nowhere is He not; in every corner of the pathless universe He dwells and reigns. He is the power behind all things, in all things; through Him all things consist; He is the intimately near, as well as the infinitely far. But where the man of science stops short in declaring that the universe is self-contained and self-explanatory, the man of religion goes on to say, The universe of universes cannot contain my God. And where the man of philosophy would say, God is the Universal Mind, the man of religion would say, God is the Universal Heart; and in the words of the noble psalm our prayer is ever rising thus, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way

in me, and lead me in the way that lasteth long." So we go a long way together, and that is why I think that for religion to-morrow will be a day of hope; I am waiting to see religion and Christ rehabilitated on the side both of science and philosophy; I am waiting to see Christian experience vindicated, and the day of the Lord is at hand.

But someone will cry out in expostulation, "Are you sure of all this? I am not prepared to go as far as you. If this is the experience of religious minds, it is not mine—I would that it were; but I can find no trace on the field of history or in the field of present-day experience of such a God as you name; the shame, the horror, and the woe of the world seem to contradict your belief in a God whose name and nature are Love." Wait a bit; you have forgotten something—the relativity of knowledge. All our thought about the things which come within the region of observation is relative; the actual you do not know, at any rate by your inductive methods. The relativity of knowledge means that you can know nothing within the wide universe except as your mind permits you to know it, and that mind operates within certain arbitrary limits which intellect, but not experience, can never pass. When I look up into the dome of heaven I know that I am looking into infinity; this morning the sun has come 95,000,000 of miles to smile upon us a watery smile. That immensity is a something we cannot grasp. But sweep it out of existence, let the 95,000,000 of miles be as if they had never been—how much is left? Blot out the visible universe—what have you retained? As much as there was before. Now, what becomes of the validity of your scientific laws,—gravitation, con-

servation of energy, and what not? Are they untrue? No, I do not say that, but they are only relatively true. You know that the actuality is infinity. The moment you have touched that concept you have passed it; but experience cannot go where your mind has thrust itself. I do not say that your scientific judgments are wrong; I say they are relative, and you have to stop at your limits.

Here is a better illustration, perhaps. Look at these beautiful stained glass windows all the way round this church; as we sit worshipping we can enjoy them. But suppose that in the audience is a man who is colour-blind; to that man the stained window below the gallery, and the frosted glass window above, are, save perhaps in outline, just the same. Now, what is wrong—the window or his perception of it? There is something short in his brain, he cannot see things as we see them; but perhaps even we cannot see them as they really are; there is a reality outside which makes us see colour and form, but perhaps there is more to see than any of us knows. I do not deny the reality; what I assert is the limit of our perception. The organist leads our devotions very beautifully on the great organ, we feel the hand of a master on the instrument. As a matter of fact, the hand of the master is on us; he sets the air vibrating, and when the vibrations reach our brain, we cannot explain the mystery, but we hear the harmony. If there were present a man who is not deaf, but who has no ear for music, what would he think about it all? His experience would be widely different from ours; are we to argue, therefore, that there was no organ? No. No harmony, then? No; but that the man was a faculty short, and the reality

could not make itself known to him. It is related of Mr. Spurgeon, who, as is well known, had no ear for music, that on one occasion he was sitting with a friend listening to an orchestra playing a beautiful symphony, and his friend said to him, "Surely, Mr. Spurgeon, you enjoy it?" "No," said the great preacher, "I don't." "But," he said, "it is exquisite." "Well," was the reply, "if every player in that orchestra had his instrument tuned to a different key and went on playing the symphony, how would you feel?" His friend said, "Indescribable." "Well," said Mr. Spurgeon, "that is how I feel now." What shall we argue from that? That the limit on one side of Mr. Spurgeon's perception came sooner than in the case of his friend; it does not argue that there was no symphony to hear, it argues that his knowledge of what he did hear was only relative to the whole. That is so with all knowledge. We know the realities of infinity and eternity; in our practical acquaintance we stop short with the symbols of time.

Then, you may say, What are you doing now? Are you going to destroy everything we know? Is there anything of which we can be sure? any point where we touch the reality? Yes, personality is the ultimate reality. The only thing in the wide universe of which you can be sure is soul. Things may not be what they seem, but when you have spoken with your friend face to face you have spoken with a reality which is not other and cannot be other than it seems to you. Communion of soul is the only real communion. "Stop!" you say, "that is an assumption." Is it? You have made it already; your man of science has made it. The validity of his judgments depends upon his assumption

of himself; unless he has made that assumption, he can get nowhither. Is it an assumption? Why, all your doings in life are based upon it; you would not have been here but for that relationship between reality and reality, soul and soul, which you know to be human society. Can we get farther? Is there a Soul of souls—"the Oversoul," as Emerson would have called it? Yes, says the highest experience the world has ever known. An assumption? Of course; an assumption borne out by experience like yours. You have no right to assume me any more than I have a right to assume God, and if you are certain of the communion between my soul and yours, I am no less certain of the communion between my soul and His. God is all and in all, Soul of our soul, Father of our spirits. The highest experience the world has ever known says that, and that experience is constant. If in any century we could prove it gone, my theme would have been very differently phrased. But when humanity has been at its noblest, humanity has been holding on to the sense of intercourse with things unseen and eternal, with Soul, which is God.

Here some may ask me for evidence. What is my evidence? Yourself. You challenge me about Him whose ways are in the sea, you remind me of the dreadfulness of life, the tragedies of every day and hour; you come pouring in from the Stock Exchange, and Fleet Street, and the Strand, and you tell me you have seen sights which have stirred your heart, made it beat fast with pity, and caused you to say, "Poor Humanity! Where is the hope, after all? Is God blind and deaf and dumb?" You think about those thirty thousand people swept into eternity amidst dreadful

torture in the West Indies the other day, and you say, "Is this the work of a father?" I cannot stop to investigate that problem now, we will come to it in time; here is the answer for the moment. You are as much a product of the Universal Substance as is Mont Pelée; perhaps you are more explanatory of what the Universal Substance is. Do you pity? Then, if the Universal cannot, Nature in one of her moods has produced something nobler than herself, and that is you. Is the Universal Substance conscious, is it moral? does it know and feel and care? can I enter into relationship with it? As soon as experience has said Yes, then I have discovered God to be a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and highest of all. I do not wait upon your experience only; I look back upon the field of history, and I ask, Whence came that idea of God we are now holding before each other's mind? My gaze rests on one day and on one Being; that day 1900 years ago, when Jesus of Nazareth preached on the hillsides of Galilee, and had compassion upon the people that were scattered as sheep with no shepherd; and there I see whence came that idea of God which is the only one with which human nature will ever be satisfied again. I listen to the voice in the upper room, I hear the questioning of Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied," and I hear the voice Divine, as He answers, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." When we have seen Jesus we may have many things to learn concerning the fathomless purposes of God, but of His nature we need to learn nothing at all—we know it. At the heart of the universe reigns One with the heart of a little child.

Do not stop to perplex yourself with questions about the Trinity. If God be like Jesus, if Jesus can pledge God, humanity has nothing more to fear. If Jesus had died cursing and raving against the faith He had preached; if He had died protesting that the Father had failed Him; if He had died calling down imprecations upon His murderers, I should have had no Gospel to preach. But it was not so; He died saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Jesus is the Soul of the universe. He is the Self of our selves, and the Life of our lives. There may be a universe of universes beyond with which we have nothing to do, but in the universe with which we have to do the ultimate is Jesus. Jesus came suffering. If He had come in great glory, I would have had no Gospel to preach to-day. He was born in a stable, cradled in a manger, lived a suffering life, and died a shameful death.

" O God, O kinsman loved, but not enough !
 O Man, with eyes majestic after death,
 Whose feet have toiled along our pathways rough,
 Whose lips drawn human breath ! "

The Cross of Calvary is the key to creation. We see God plainest in the pathos of life; everything noble rises there. Here we come near to the heart of things; here can experience rest and be satisfied; and we may say with the Quaker poet of America :

" A marvel seems the universe,
 A miracle our life and death,
 A mystery which I cannot pierce,
 Around, above, beneath.
 Now my spirit sighs for home,
 And longs for light whereby to see,
 And like a weary child has come,
 O, Father, unto Thee."

II

WHAT IS MAN?

*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.*

—*Psalm viii. 4-5. R. V.*

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

—*Rom. iii. 23.*

WE have seen that the first of all questions is What is God? When once a man has settled this question for himself he is in possession of a philosophy of life and an imperative of conduct. The question, you observe, is not whether God is; that is beyond discussion. I have tried to show that every man believes in God even when he says he does not; but all men do not believe in the same view of the nature of God. Hence it is that upon a man's doctrine of God depends his view of himself and of the destiny of humanity as a whole. If he thinks meanly of the one, he thinks meanly of the other; if he thinks nobly of the one, he thinks nobly of the other; and when once he has come to affirm the Christian view of the nature of God—that He is Father, Saviour, Redeemer, Friend—then, and not till then, are we in a position to consider hopefully the question, What is man?

To that question many answers of a conflicting nature have been given, and are being given in the world of thought and action. Suppose I put the ques-

tion to some medical student, "Can you, sir, tell me what is man?" and it is possible he may answer thus, "Man is a highly developed vertebrate, a more or less clever and successful ape, who has worsted his competitors in the struggle for existence, and stands as conqueror at the head of things." I may put the question to yonder pessimistic philosopher, whose pity for humanity lacks nothing of our own, but whose confidence in the destiny of humanity is the accompaniment of his answer to this question, What is man? "I ask you, sir, what have you to say in answer to the Psalmist?" Listen to him. "Man is a vapour, a breath that passeth away; man is as a bubble upon the wave of causation, here to-day, gone to-morrow, gone for ever. Man is but one of nature's many experiments, and is to make way by-and-bye for another and perhaps a greater. Man has no destiny beyond that which he pictures to himself in his own fancy. In the words of that immortal pessimist, Omar Khayyám:

"The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone."

I will put the question to this busy City man, "What have you to say in answer to the Psalmist's question; what would you say of yourself?" The answer might be, "I do not know; it takes me all my time to live; my horizon is narrow and contracted, and when I think I get no nearer to the solution of the great mystery."

"Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."

Now, over against those answers set the words of the Psalmist, and with these ringing in our ears let us address ourselves anew to the statement of our position in the great order of the universe.

*“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.”*

There, on that statement of experience, I pin my faith. When we have answered the question What is God? there is no room for pessimism in the statement of the question What is man? I therefore ask you to consider this answer of the Psalmist under the three following divisions: (1) Man is that part of the great scheme of things which is the best explanation of the whole. (2) He has some power of self-direction and self-control, and therefore of moral responsibility. He is a universe within a universe. (3) The destiny of humanity is bound up with that of Jesus Christ.

I. Man is that expression, that part of the great scheme of things which is the best explanation of the whole. As we have said before, I see no objection to the declaration that from one point of view God and Law and the Universe are one. Even to the Christian, God, self-limited, is the Universe. When we are trying to get to the secret of the Universe we are really striving after the explanation of the nature of God. Those two questions are one and the same. So, my friend, the medical student, when you go back to your laboratory, no matter what you may call the work in which you are engaged, it is nothing more nor less than this:

In trying to find out the secret of phenomena, you are trying to discover the nature of God. Now, where can we look for that? I answer, in the microcosm of the great macrocosm of existence. You must read man to find out what God is. I am not afraid of anthropomorphism, provided you keep your hand firmly upon it. A French writer once sarcastically said, "In the beginning God created man in His own image, and ever since then man has been returning the compliment by making God in his." What else are we to do? You must read God by the highest of that whole which God has produced—humanity; and by that I do not mean to say you must read God by what you are, but by what you have been made capable of seeing—and that is another thing. So, in spite of the evil, woe, sin, and imperfection of humanity, the great witness in the world for the nature of God is that which humanity has been made capable of seeing and being.

Once in the field of history our eyes have seen and our hands have handled the word of life. Humanity has not been kept in the dark as to what it is intended to be. We have looked once, and seen, and to-day all men, in this country, at any rate, whether they are Christian or Pagan, declare that in Jesus Christ we have seen that attainment of human nature which is worthy to be God, whether it is or not.

" Truth is within ourselves ;
It takes no rise from outward things,
Whate'er we may believe."

Here I will hazard a proposition—that no man ever yet reasoned out his position in regard to truth, and especially theological truth. You never yet attained

to truth by a process of ratiocination; you have simply seen it, and that is all; and every wise man, no matter how wise he may be, does just that. He sees a thing, and then he sets to work to find out how he saw it. Once, on the field of history, we have seen humanity at its best; and for nineteen hundred years we have been trying to find out how to attain to an ideal for ourselves which has already been manifested in history. We know now what man is, and it has been well said, "An honest man is the noblest work of God." Shall I say a holy man? In other words, the nearest approach you can find to the ideal of Jesus Christ—that is, the highest declaration of the nature of the Divine that we have ever had; and it is that which entitles us to call God Father. Burns said, in words which are as much English as Scotch now:

"A king can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's abune his might—
Gude faith, he maunna fa' that!

"For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."

When you have attained to personality, when you have discovered a man soul to soul, heart to heart, mind to mind, you have discovered the ultimate reality of the Universe. For God, who is the Father of our spirits, is not less than personal; He is our Father, our Friend, and no man can come unto the Father but by looking unto the Christ, who has revealed what the Father is.

There arises in our mind a claim upon the Fatherhood of God consequent upon the discovery that we can enter into relations with Him. I ask young men especially, Have you ever felt upon you the almost irresistible impulse to utter yourself to the Unseen—to know, to pray, to serve that nobler than yourself, that once you have seen in Christ and now associate with God? Well, when you have done that you have made a claim upon the Unseen which is an affirmation of your eternal citizenship.

“ Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal,
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.”

If you can pray to God, if God has ever spoken to you, you have claimed something greater than time: the eternity of God presumes the immortality of man.

“ How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man ! ”

The Psalmist was right when he said, “ A little lower than God, crowned with glory and honour,” fitted for a greater sphere of activity than earth can ever present. Man was made to reign with God eternally in the heavens.

*“ When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man, that thou visitest him ? ”*

Man is Thy child, my Father! and we shall seek Thee in the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.

II. We have some power of self-direction and self-control. The latest cult of the hour, which, after all, is a very old one, is that none of us can help being what we are; that if we have made mistakes in life, we are to be pitied rather than blamed; that in point of fact heredity and environment will account for everything; that far back in the mysterious past, all that has come to you, and all that you are, was already foreordained. I will admit that there is very little room that I can find for escape from determinism, if we stick to logic; so, therefore, I should say that if this man is bad and that man is good, logically we cannot praise the good and we cannot blame the bad. But there are some things higher than logic. The love of children, friends, home, the most illogical thing imaginable—what would life be without it? When we say effect must invariably follow cause, and for every effect there is an antecedent cause, there is a question which philosophy cannot answer—why should any effect follow any cause? I take up this hymn-book, and I choose to drop it. You say it will fall and hit the floor for certain. A man of science might be more careful, and say, “Probably it will fall, for books dropped so have fallen so often that by an observable number of sequences we have deduced a law, and we call it gravitation.” The effect of the letting go probably will be that the book will fall. Why should that effect follow that cause? We are back on the old mystery. We are on the borderland again of the question of the relative nature of the data on which all the conclusions about our life and history are based.

So we go back from the consideration of these curious and unprofitable questions to the simple experience

of simple men. You know perfectly well, and no one will ever reason you out of it, that if you did a mean thing yesterday, and conscience tells you about it to-day, you are being reminded that you need not have done it, and that you are a guilty man. We will go farther than that, and say that if our responsibility for sin—there! the word has got in; it is not only the theologian's word, it is a word of the newspaper and the fireside, and of the business house, and every place where men meet and serve. Our responsibility for sin, I was going to say, may be less than we think, but you can never explain it away altogether. Recently we were all agitated in common with the rest of England when we heard of a certain case in which a mother in high station had ill-treated her little child. London rang with protests; we said, "There is evidently one law for the rich and another for the poor; this woman should have been punished more than she was, and the judge was unfair." We may have been right, or we may have been wrong, about the case of little Connie Penruddock, but there is no mistake about the fact that the community, one and all, without reasoning on the question, at once jumped to the conclusion that both mother and judge were to blame; and in so doing we have presumed responsibility to someone or to some great thing for what we are and what we do.

"Here!" says a man, "don't go too far; you little know how I have been fighting this week, and how I have been beaten in spite of myself. You could not despise me more than I despise myself, but my moral weakness is such that I never can hope to gain a victory over the man that now is. Made in the image

of God, indeed; more likely I have been made in the image of the devil!"

You are not the first who has said this. We will go back to the New Testament, and to that wise man who said, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The thing I would, I do not; the thing I would not, that do I." Now emerges that huge problem, not merely of responsibility, but of escape from things we are prone to do—the problem of sin. It is not only a problem for preachers; it is a problem for every man. The question of responsibility comes up—to whom shall we flee except to Him who is the Father of our spirits, and to that unnameable right which every one of us feels pleads within his heart when he gives way to wrong. Here rises the question, to which there is only one answer, and that answer is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Speaking plain words to plain men, let me say this: Your sense of sin already exists, whether you have a sense of God or not. Here is a curious thing—a man lay awake last night because of one guilty fact in his existence he would be glad to get rid of. It is not God he has been thinking of, nor God he fears; it is that law of righteousness which will not be gainsaid, and which is ever speaking in his poor perturbed human heart. Yes, the law of sin is a powerful fact in humanity. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Do not talk about a fall in the far past; men can wrangle forever about that, and get no nearer to the facts. Speak about this, which you know to be the truth, that, whether any man besides yourself has ever fallen or not, you have fallen.

III. Now we come to our third point, which as briefly as may be is this: The destiny of men is, whether they

know it or not, bound up with that of Jesus Christ. Only once have we seen anyone who could be termed sinless; and the challenge which was given to the world nineteen hundred years ago, when Christ was helpless in the hands of His accusers, to the accusers themselves, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" is the world's hope at this moment. I state a proposition which cannot be proved—nothing worth proving can be proven; and it matters very little—it is this: Sinlessness and Deity involve each other; suffering and humanity involve each other. When we have stated the perfect Man, we have declared a suffering Saviour; when we have spoken about a suffering Saviour, we have declared incarnate God, and, as has been beautifully said, "God became man that man might become God." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." If there never had been a Jesus Christ humanity would have been crying out for Him to-day, or for one such as He, to do the work He claims to do. We cannot rise of ourselves from that slough in which we are, however we got there. Sin is intractable, the one problem for which no parliament is sufficient, and with which no human wisdom can cope. Hear it, as the Master preached it, as of old, the only One who ever declared Himself able to loose the bands and let us go free. If Jesus Christ can be proved to have been no Saviour, and to have had no more right to speak in the name of God than the sinful man who addresses you, then it is worse for humanity than if He had never come at all; for until the Dayspring from on high men were looking hopefully forward for someone to come, something from out the mystery to save;

and when Jesus came they thought they had found Him, and for nineteen hundred years we have been preaching the sinless One, by the Story of the Cross, as the One who is mighty to save. If that Gospel were a lie, better there had never been a Jesus; it is worse than if there had been no Gospel to proclaim. When we claim that the Christ is able to save, we look beyond the immediate moment, back into human history, and we hear men say, "He has shown Himself able to keep." Is the Christ, who is humanity, the head and the representative of the best in humanity, the Christ who is our hope, reigning at the heart of things or not? If He is, and this is His world, well it is for you and me! "*What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him but little lower than God.*" Taking hold of Christ, he has taken hold of God, and, though all have sinned and come short of His glory, we reign through the merit of the sinless One to all eternity.

Henry Drummond on one occasion was crossing the Atlantic, and on the deck of the vessel on which he was sailing a number of passengers had gathered to sing hymns, as they often do, and the hymn chosen on that evening happened to be "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." As one man sang, another listened to him with considerable interest, and at the close said:

"I feel I have heard your voice before; can you tell me where it was?" "No," said the singer, "but the singing of this hymn recalls to me an interesting event in my life. I was a soldier in the Confederate Army in the great Civil War. I was on outpost duty one night in a lonely place. It was reported that the enemy were in a wood near by. I knew my life was in great

danger. To keep up my spirits, I sang this hymn, and when I came to the line 'Cover my defenceless head with the shadow of Thy wing,' it seemed as if all my fears passed away, and I stood for the rest of the night as firm and fearless as though it were daylight. I felt as if my prayer had been answered somehow." "Now," said the other, "you listen to my story. I was an officer in the Northern Army, and that night I was scouting in the wood you mention. That was where I heard your voice, and as you sang 'Jesus, Lover of my Soul,' we were drawing near, not knowing what you sang. When I and my men came within ear-shot you had just reached the words, which you sang out louder than the rest:

" 'Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of 'Thy wing,' "

and at that moment we had you covered with the muzzles of a dozen rifles. My men were just waiting for the word to send you into eternity, but when you sang that line, I turned to them and said, 'Rifles down; let us go back to camp.' "

Here they met, on the deck of a ship in mid-ocean, to tell about the Christ that had governed the act of the one and saved the life of the other. It is a simple story, but it brings me to the point where I would bring every man if I could. You do not feel yourself able for your own life and destiny to say with the soldier :

" Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find,
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind."

You can venture your all upon that Man who leads on before. Still I see Him leading there! At the Cross of Calvary there is life and hope for humanity. What is man? August and abject! What is man? A child of God, a child of shame. What is man? A brother of Christ, the redeemed of the Cross. We need no more.

“ Just and holy is Thy name,
I am all unrighteousness.
False and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.”

III

PERSONAL COMMUNION WITH GOD

And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.—Exodus xxxiii. 11.

IN this narrative of old time, and particularly in the sentence which forms our text, there is something which is puzzling to the practical Englishman and to the twentieth-century mind. We are nowadays so literal and exact in our statement of truth, and so little tolerant of the too liberal use of metaphor and symbol, that we are apt to hesitate before expressions of spiritual experience which are conveyed in a mental and spiritual dialect different from our own. Moreover, we are impatient of views of the Divine nature which would tend to localise, humanise, or limit God. So far is this the case that even the crude and exaggerated statement of the Godhead of Jesus becomes a serious obstacle to many otherwise religious minds. Hence it is that in reading a narrative like this of the converse which Moses held with God in the tabernacle in the wilderness we are hindered rather than helped by the anthropomorphism—that is, the manlikeness—of the aspect under which the Deity is presented to our minds. We ask ourselves, Did Moses speak with God face to face? Did the Lord look with human eyes and speak with human voice to His

servant? Could He do so? Have we here a sudden and unimpressive anticipation of the manger at Bethlehem and the upper room at Jerusalem? Obviously, it was not so; the Lord dwelleth not in temples made with hands, and the creation cannot contain Him; yet hath the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, declared Him. A sentence or two below our text we read: "No man shall look upon my face and live." "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Let us dismiss the difficulty and penetrate at once to the spiritual meaning which underlies these symbolical, mystical words. Moses did speak with God face to face, as all prophets and princes of the Spirit have been privileged to do; as you and I may, and can, and do. He communed with Him, "*solus cum solo*," alone with the Great Alone, the Only One, with the only one. He talked with Him "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." So spake he, this leader of the host of Israel, with the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. It was no stranger-God with whom he held converse, but one whom our hearts know and our souls desire, the Fairest among ten thousand, and the Altogether Lovely, who, in after days, declared to His own: "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Whether he knew it or not, it was with the Christ—our Christ, the point at which humanity meets Deity, that Moses communed in the tabernacle in the wilderness; just as, in after days, with clearer vision,

he communed with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, nigh to Jerusalem.

I ask you, therefore, to consider with me, in the light of the New Testament experience, this message of ancient Israel, and we will think about two things: (1) The present-day need of personal communion with God; (2) the method thereof and the blessing therefrom.

I. It is a remarkable thing that when we are seeking for the language of adoration and spiritual feeling we have to go to the Old Testament; we seek in the phrases of psalmist and prophet the words which express for us—what no words can ever adequately express—the feelings of the soul when aspiring towards God. “One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [the home of the Lord], all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple;” “my meditation of Him shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord.” Such words as these have been taken, not wrested, from their context, transferred and concentrated upon the feeling the Christian has for Jesus; and to-day, if we want to say what we experience concerning Him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, we turn to the language of ancient Israel, to psalmist and prophet. The very words of our text have a sweeter, tenderer meaning when we think of them, as applied to Christ.

The Christian centuries have been marked by experience of the closer relationship existing between the soul and its Maker, as expressed in the language of the Old Testament, but with the high spiritual consciousness of the New.

Let us think of the joy the Christian has in personal communion with the risen and exalted Christ. Eight centuries ago, or nearly, Bernard of Clairvaux wrote :

“ Jesus ! the very thought of Thee
 With sweetness fills my breast,
 But sweeter far Thy face to see,
 And in Thy presence rest.
 Jesus, my only joy be Thou,
 As Thou my prize wilt be ;
 Jesus, be Thou my glory now
 And through eternity.”

No mere sentimentalist was he who wrote those words, but a man at whose word Europe trembled when Europe was wrong ; kings and princes confessed their sin ; the Christian world responded to his prophet-call.

St. Francis of Assisi, the Methodist of the thirteenth century, was once watched by one who loved him well that he might learn from his master how to pray, as his master had learnt from Him who taught His disciples in the days of old ; and when he watched with indelicate intrusion, but with a holy intent, this was all he discovered : Over and over again, the saint was saying, with head bowed and hands clasped, the name of Jesus. The great Apostle of the Reformation, moving in stirring times, riding upon the storm, writes to one who knew him well, “ I am so busy that I cannot get on without eight hours a day spent in prayer to my Master.” Are we to understand that Martin Luther could take eight hours apart from his work ? because, if so, the conditions of his busy life were very dissimilar from the conditions of yours. Nothing of the kind.

“Work shall be prayer if all be wrought
 As Thou wouldst have it done,
 And prayer by Thee inspired and taught
 Itself with work be one.”

But there was this difference between Luther and some of you: Before his thoughts became purposes, before his purposes became deeds, they were referred to the Master of all; his communion with Him was sweet; he spake with Him face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend; and, therefore, it was that it might be said of him as it was said of John Knox by the Regent Morton: “He never feared the face of man, so familiar was he with the face of God.”

Without unduly lengthening these instances, I would remind Methodists of the way in which that mighty movement, early Methodism, achieved its initial triumphs. Wesley writes in his journal, “At three in the morning, as we”—a little group who met in an upper room, like that at Jerusalem—“continued instant in prayer, the Holy Ghost came mightily upon us, insomuch that, overawed, we fell to the ground. When we had somewhat recovered from the sense of the presence of the Majesty on High, we broke with one accord into the strains of the ‘Te Deum,’ ‘We praise, Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.’” Thence went Methodism forth, conquering and to conquer.

Verily in every century personal communion with God has been held to be the highest privilege of the soul; so much so that, as “J. B.,” of *The Christian World*, has put it, men have tried by illegitimate means to retain the experience, while failing to fulfil the conditions thereof. For, by communion, such as I have

instanced just now, I am not speaking of prayer only in the sense of petition. Our joy in the presence of our loved and nearest does not spring from the fact that they or we are begging from each other, though we delight to give ourselves to each other. Communion of soul is the only real communion. There is a language of the eye more eloquent than the language of the lip, and a language of silence more eloquent than either; it is enough to be near, to feel yourself gladdened in the presence of the loved. And as Fénelon, the great French preacher and mystic, has phrased it for us, so we might say, "Thou art, O Father, so really within ourselves, where we seldom or never look, that Thou art to us a hidden God." We have not arrived at the meaning of life, nor at the possession of our own souls till we have learned what it means to commune with God; for at one point in experience, as J. H. Newman reminds us, the only realities for the soul, the only realities for any man, are oneself and God.

This is the corrective for all that is wrong, feverish, agitated, evil, in life; and this, in the city of London to-day, and in this congregation, is the greatest and strongest need—whether you are conscious of it or not—that exists for you. We are divine; you are divine; your divinity will only find itself in contact with Deity. The soul is not yours to begin with; it has to be wrought for, gained, and won; the man who knows nothing of communion with God is a stranger to himself, and we find ourselves only as we find Him whom our hearts desire. This is an experience greater than any proposition; it cannot be put into syllogisms; but it is the most real of all experiences to some who wor-

ship here to-day. Our home is in God—in Tennysonian phrase—

“ When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home,”

and as Sabatier, the great French theologian, has said, “ If wearied with the world of pleasure or of toil, I long to find my soul again, and live a deeper life, I can accept no other Guide and Master than Jesus Christ, because in Him alone optimism is without frivolity and seriousness without despair.”

II. The method of such communion is not far to seek. I am not afraid of a trite observation, or of repeating something that is venerable, when I say, The first essential for busy men is withdrawal from your fellows that you may be alone with God. Into the tabernacle in the wilderness! Leave the multitude at the tent-door, you will serve them the better when you return. Fathers and mothers, burdened for your children, life means many things to you; it would become simple and glorious and beautiful if you left them sometimes that you might bear them on your hearts to God.

“ Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear!
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.”

Here are you, City men, snatching an hour or half an hour in the middle of the day to worship God. Why are you going back again to toil? It is because of those represented here, but not amongst us—the wife and the little ones at home. You are not fighting for your own hand. Neither was that man who cheated

you this morning; pity him, if it were so. I never yet met a man who was not playing to an audience, however small. You are caring for somebody, that is why you toil; you are labouring and suffering, not for yourself; life would be dreary to-morrow, if they were gone. You live in the being of another or others. They were God's before they were yours; those whom He has given you He could care for Himself without you. Would you learn how to serve? Leave them and be alone with God. "Haven't the time!" You have; you have time for many things; time to commune; listen to the voice of the Eternal. Time?—there is time in Cheapside to command audience of heaven. Time?—why, you are always alone, even in your busiest hour. Make a sanctuary outside the City Temple, in the midst of your fellows, in the heart of your business, speak with God in the tabernacle, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

The other condition of your communion is openness to God. Cease from the prayer of agonised entreaty; that has its place; wait for the speech of God. Our fathers knew all about this. I saw on the service paper last week that the City Temple is the oldest Congregational church in London. It dates from 1640. Do you know what was the type of religious life then? We could criticise it; it was very grim; in some cases it was very hard, perhaps it was too self-sufficient. But no man waited then for his neighbour to tell him about the preciousness of God; he knew. That was the day of the high-backed pew, when a man came to church not to look at anybody, but to speak with God. That experience was real; it made such men as conquered at Marston Moor and sent the Royalists to confusion

at Naseby. They were not less men than you; there was no effeminacy in the Puritan. Now, in this day of conventions, and demonstrations, and congresses, and what not, we commune with each other rather than with God, and we lose because we do not know what it is—am I exaggerating?—in the same degree to be alone with the Maker of us all. There is prayer which is stillness, susceptibility to the Eternal, a heart ready for the impulses brought by the Spirit of God.

“ And when in silent awe we wait
And word and sign forbear,
The hinges of the golden gate
Move, soundless, to our prayer.”

That is the time of vision. Would you see what the needs of the world are, that you may have opportunity to remedy them? See in the stillness, see in the solitude, see in the holy place, the multitudes waiting without the tent door for the Prophet, Master, and Leader to return. “Our deepest feelings are precisely those we are least able to express, and even in the act of adoration silence is our highest praise.”

Then comes the blessing. The still, small voice that speaks within needs no apologist; you know it when you hear it. There is a sweet comfort and a shining peace in the holy place with Jesus.

Well do I know the exceptions to this great statement. It is not always easy to pray. Sometimes you will be overwhelmed in the black waters of sorrow, and feel as if utterance were denied you, and you cannot pray. Say so to the living God. I have here some words that I copied for you, written by a fourteenth-century mystic, who would not recognise the City of to-day, and yet they were written not far from the

City: "Pray inwardly"—from within—"though thou thinkest it savour thee not; for it is profitable though thou feel not, though thou see naught, yea, though thou thinkest thou canst not; for in dryness, in barrenness, in sickness, in feebleness, then is thy prayer well pleasant unto Me—and I am Jesus." When I am thinking I am listening, and the voice that speaks to me is the voice that spake by the Lake of Galilee—the same, and not another; and the Christ who spake to our fathers, the Christ in whose name we are gathered here, the same Christ it is who speaks within your own soul now. Cease from your restlessness, give Him a hearing; He preaches His own sermons, brings His own message; keeps with His own power those whom the Father has given unto Him.

Hear me, you who are strong, and true, and brave, but who do not commune: you are missing something. Begin even now; leave the rest of us and cleave to God. Be your problem what it may, you are insufficient for it; for even though you do not pray, God remembers and saves, but when you do the whole world is different, the light is upon it that never was on sea or land. Hear me, you who are sunken in despair, you who are in chains and bondage to propensity or shame: speak not to me concerning this. The arm of flesh will fail you; you dare not trust another's, much less your own. Go right to the Fountain of all that is good; speak to the Eternal, who is the source of everything that is holy, and tender, and true; learn to love by learning to pray. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" "and we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory unto glory as by the Spirit of the Lord."

IV

CAN GOD ANSWER PRAYER?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?—Luke xi. 13.

This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

—1 John v. 14-15.

THE subject of prayer is one of never-failing interest to human-kind. For all men pray at some time or other, whether fitfully or constantly, in weakness or in strength, in sorrow or in joy. Some men pray because it is their chiefest delight so to do, and some pray because necessity drives them to it; but they all pray. Prayer is a constant element, and the impulse to pray is ever present to human nature. The question is not, Shall we pray? but, Can God hear us when we do; is there room for Him to answer; is it any use to pray? To this question our texts—the one on the authority of Jesus Christ, and the other the testimony of Christian experience—supply the answer. The former, remember, is the simple, but very direct and unequivocal, declaration, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give”—that which includes and is present in every good gift—“the Holy

Spirit to them that ask Him?" And the testimony of Christian experience, the experience of a man who had heard these words spoken, and lived upon the strength of them, is this, "This is the confidence that we have in Him"—in Christ, as you will see by the context—"that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

Some things are very striking about the New Testament teaching on the subject of prayer, but none of them is more striking than this, and the more I ponder the matter the more remarkable it seems to me—the fewness of the conditions attached to the prayer that compels answer from God. New Testament teaching, especially the words of Jesus, are perfectly direct, simple, and emphatic about this. Further, our Lord never hesitates in His teaching about prayer to apply the anthropomorphic argument. He illustrates the doings of God from the best we know of men, and when we have said all we can say upon the subject of prayer, we shall just have come back to the words of our Lord, "If ye,"—any of you that is a father—"give, then how much more your heavenly Father, from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift."

Moreover, I observe, and it is very striking when you think of it, that our Lord does not illustrate the doings of the Father of our spirits in the best man, otherwise His argument might have run thus: "Look at me, see how kind I am and how good; the Father is as good as I; He will do for you the things I am trying to do." But His argument was drawn from the experience of any man. Looking upon those who, im-

perfect as they were, represented, perhaps, the best that Jewish society produced at the time, but yet imperfect, struggling, failing, falling men, He said, "If ye," any of you, "being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more your heavenly Father!" The argument seems to me to gain strength indeed; for if our Lord were here at this moment, He would select any man in this congregation and make him His illustration and His proof of the goodness of God. He would say, Are you capable of pity? then God is not worse than you. Are you capable of kindness to your child? God's love must be greater than yours, for it produced you. Are you capable of taking delight in answering prayer? why, you are doing it every day; that is what you are in the City for, in order that you may have the wherewith to answer the prayers that will meet you when you get home. If you, any of you, bad or good, know how to give good gifts unto those whom you love, how much more your Father which is in heaven. Robert Browning has very beautifully expressed this in one of his best-known poems:

" Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt His own love can compete with it?
Here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator—the end, what
began?

.

I believe it! 'Tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive;
In the first is the last, in Thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift; Thou canst grant it, moreover, as prompt to
my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air."

What is prayer? Not everything that receives that

name is really prayer. Most, if not all, of you have read Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame," and you may remember that terribly realistic last chapter—a faithful picture, I fear, of mediævalism at its worst—and the introduction of the figure of Louis XI. and of the poor girl who is being done to death by wicked men. Accused of being a witch, the poor, simple girl takes refuge in a cathedral, and Louis—religious, crafty, superstitious, villainous, vicious, unscrupulous—prays, ere the sin is committed, for forgiveness, that he may take the girl from the sanctuary and drag her to a death of agony and shame. He manages to convince himself that forgiveness is accorded before the deed is done. He would have called it prayer. What would you call it? That petition came from the hell to which its fruits returned; it damned the man who prayed it, not the poor girl against whom it was prayed. You need no further illustration as to what is not prayer. What is? Prayer is that in which the soul looks up; it must be the expression of nobleness in the man who prays. You stand upon the tableland of character when you pray. It is the utterance of the soul's highest to God, and He will be content with nothing less. You have reached to the limit of capacity when you have called to God; the best that is in you appeals to High Heaven when you pray. Prayer, said William Law, is the nearest approach unto God and the highest enjoyment of Him that we can have in this world.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
 The Christian's native air,
 His watchword at the gates of death,
 He enters heaven by prayer."

Prayer is all this. Is it anything else? Yes; prayer is a demand note addressed to Heaven, prayer is the human will moving the arm of God, prayer is grasping the power unseen and bringing it down to work great things in the seen. Prayer is human goodness transcending its limitations and bringing down the willing aid of the willing Father in human things. But, says someone, you have trenched now upon a difficult subject, and made a very dangerous statement. Is it reasonable to believe in such prayer as that? Is not this compelling the Arbiter of our destinies to abdicate? I admit the difficulty, and answer it thus:

First, it is a matter of simple experience that, law or no law, difficulty or no difficulty, prayer does move the arm of God. Here kneels George Müller, praying for a breakfast for a thousand and more orphans, and it comes; here is a life's record in which a man prayed a solid million into existence, without asking a man for a penny. That is evidence as well worth consideration as the law by which an apple falls to the ground. Here is C. H. Spurgeon kneeling at the end of his financial year to tell God about the difficulties that had to be met and the record that has to be placed to his credit. That man, who lived a life of prayer, and was a prince of the Gospel, if ever there was one, would have said at the last moment, if asked for his testimony, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. God has never failed when I have called upon Him."

The witness of holiness is worth investigation. What is holiness? I wish I could tell you the difference between holiness and nobleness. It does not mean that the one excludes the other, but it is the dif-

ference between the diamond and the carbon. Nobody can tell us what makes a carbon a diamond. The same substances are in both, combined in exactly the same proportions, but the one will shine in the dark and the other will not. We cannot see what makes the difference, except that the diamond, which is a carbon after all, has managed to feed upon the light somehow, and store it, and shine by its lustre. Holiness is character, the shining light that never was on sea or land; holiness is character with a fragrance; holiness is an influence of itself, and it is begotten of communion with the Unseen, and without that you never have it, and no man has ever had it. When you speak about the men you know in business life who are living well and nobly without any particular faith in God, with nothing more than a faith in right, you know, as well as I know, and as well as they know, too, that if you place a Spurgeon and a Catherine Booth alongside them, the difference is that of the diamond and of the carbon, and the difference is made by prayer. The one is mighty in communion with the Unseen, and the other is not. The witness of holiness to the efficacy of prayer is this, that no saint ever prayed and doubted about his answer; if it came not in one way, it came in another. Unvarying, unaltering is the witness of holiness to the fact that God does hear prayer, however it is done.

Secondly, moral freedom and answered prayer involve each other. The one factor of uncertainty in the whole scheme of things of which you are a part, is human will. Philosophers may say what they please, but you never get the ordinary man to believe that he has not some power of control over his own destiny. You came from a business house just now, where you

were engaged in altercation with a man, blaming him for a dirty trick. You know that he need not have done it; he knows it, too. You come into the presence of one whose face reminds you of a noble and unselfish act, and you think, I wish I were like him. He need not have been what he is; it is grand that he chose the higher. You would never get men to believe that the world is so colourless, so automatic, that men have no power of self-direction and self-control. This power may be much more limited than you think. I am prepared to conclude that in many instances moral responsibility is not so great as the bystanders imagine; but it is always there, however small the circle within which it is exercised. A man remains a man with the God-like faculty of willing the right and avoiding the wrong. Once you have admitted that factor of uncertainty, which experience always testifies to, you have admitted the possibility, nay, the imperative probability, of answer to prayer. For if you can take the helm out of the hands of God, you can put it back; if you are free to do wrong, you are free to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner"; if you are free to exercise influence over any man, you are free to pray to the Giver of the awful gift that He would help you in the exercise thereof. If you are free as a spirit to commune with the Father of spirits, you are free to transcend law. For what is law but your experience of the dependableness of God? We talk as if law was something inexorable and to be afraid of. Law presumes the Law-giver; it is personality at the back, a consistent God who ordains the things upon which you can depend. Under the uniformity of nature there exists an inexhaustible variety. No flower will ever grow in the

same spot as another ; you never have two leaves in the vegetable world alike. Under the operation of law, unceasing as it is, God is making a differentiation all the time. Your life is different from that of the man who sits next to you, and though there be a Divinity that shapes your ends, rough-hew them how you will, there is power left for you to refer thought, act, and purpose back to God, who gave you the power of self-direction and self-control.

Prayer is the reinforcement of human endeavour ; it is not the substitute for it. Prayer is the enlargement of your personality ; prayer is working on power from the unseen—mighty are those who know how to bring it. It is said that the presence of Napoleon on the field of battle was equivalent to a reinforcement of 40,000 men. Why? Because he so increased the fighting value of every separate man, that his mere presence was equivalent to another army. Prayer will do that for you. The man of prayer is the best kind of man. The man who can go to God when he has done his own best is drawing what the natural man cannot have. The spiritual man is the man of power, because he is the man of prayer.

The latest of fads in the semi-religious world is that which, under various titles, is most commonly described as "Christian Science." The vogue which this fad has is a rebuke to me and to other preachers of the Gospel. For the only moiety of truth that it contains is the purest Christianity. It tells you of the possibility of a victorious life, a life of victory over ill and suffering, danger and fear ; and its votaries say that what is required from those who would be Christian Scientists is power to call and power to trust ; in

tune with the Infinite must you be; those who are in tune with the Infinite are masters of their destiny, never the victims of fate. Is that new in the history of the world? It was taught upon the hillside of Galilee nineteen hundred years ago by Him who spake as never man spake; it was taught by John the Beloved, in the words of our text. If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth, and if we know that He heareth, we know that we have conquered. Let there be no mistake about the power which comes into a man's life if he has the gift of prayer.

“ Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear !
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.”

I have often said that if I can get a man to pray, not now and then, but as the habit of his life, I have been the means of saving him. He will be strong, instead of weak; instead of leaning for help upon his fellows, he will be their benefactor and the ambassador of the Unseen. Get a man to pray, and you have made him strong, you have given him faith, you have made him climb; get a man to pray, and the Holy Spirit will shine through him, and the world will be better because he lives.

There no true prayer without its answer. This may seem a great deal to say, but I would like every young man to remember that point, if he remembers no other. Louis XI. did not pray, but that man did who said, “ O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul.” He looked up, and he stood at his highest; that prayer set heaven in motion. Prayer is just willing Godward. The answer to prayer begins at the moment when you

begin to pray. Somebody prayed this morning a prayer that the preacher did not pray; perhaps nobody prayed it but himself; he does not want to publish what it was. It is of great importance to him, and to him only. Perhaps it was a prayer of wounded love, the cry of a broken heart and of ill-requited affection. It went right to the heart of the Eternal; it was worthy to go. You may have to wait a long time before you see any fruit of it, but that prayer was as the prayer of omnipotence. You took hold, as Christ would take hold, of the hand of the Father, and what is to be in response to the petition has begun now.

Will you who are tempted, who have been fighting a battle with the beast within you, who know what it is to contend against fearful odds in a world of extremes, of light and darkness, sorrow and joy, who feel as if you are being overborne in the battle of life, think of this: Every cry that goes Godward brings its immediate response to the perturbed and anxious heart. For there is always an immediate as well as a deferred answer to prayer. Some prayers are answered quickly, some slowly. All are answered more grandly than the scope of the petition itself, but there is never a failure, and if you can only learn that it is so, there will be no prayer that you will ever pray of which you will not be conscious that God has spoken in the moment of your prayer. It is God's will that you should use yours; it is God's delight to hear you pray. Have you ever gone into the presence of God when you felt as if you could not speak to anybody, as if the world was too black, your confidence in yourself too feeble, that the first thing to do was to get alone somewhere, and speak your thoughts, desires, and anxieties, to the great

Friend, the living, loving, helpful One whom eyes cannot see, but whose presence we feel? How did you come out of that presence-chamber? Changed, I warrant; not because circumstances had changed, but because peace had stolen into your heart, and you felt that

“God’s in His heaven
All’s right with the world.”

It was as though a mother had picked up her little child, and soothed its disquiet, and bidden it be still, and promised nothing, but in the love had given all. Just to know Him and to feel Him near is to have all your prayers answered before the answer to one of them has come. Some of you are thinking, maybe, less about yourselves than about those whom God has placed near you, and you may say, “I know of a prayer that was not answered; I remember praying long ago about that wife, that boy of mine whom it would seem as if nothing could save; I wrestled in agony with God, and the only answer was death.” Maybe that was the answer. Sometimes we seem unequal to the task of caring for those whom God has placed under our care, and we tell Him so. Perhaps the answer is that He takes them home, cares for them Himself, and when we stand upon the other side of death we shall see what it all means.

“We kneel—how weak! We rise—how full of power!
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?”

V

SUPPOSING CHRIST WERE ONLY A MAN

Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! —John xix. 5.

WHY did Pilate say, "Behold the man!"? Let us see. For the first time in his experience, doubtless, the Roman Governor hesitated about the crucifixion of a helpless victim of popular fury. Pilate's chief inducement, one would have thought, would have been to please the Jews, win their approval by crucifying one who was evidently the object of their bitter hatred. Yet he hesitated almost up to the point when the mob would have turned upon him and wrested from him the sceptre, or reported him to his dread and jealous lord, the Cæsar, gloomily waiting in imperial Rome. Yet he hesitated, for he had never looked on a prisoner like this one, helpless in his hands, without weapon to defend himself, without friend to speak for him; Pilate felt that he had changed places with his prisoner; he was upon his trial, and this kingly man was his judge. He had never looked upon such a man. Even in his hour of shame and agony the Christ, the victim of the hatred of the people he came to save, towered above them in majesty, and compelled the reluctant admiring homage of this master of legions himself. "Art thou a king?" he said; and the Christ, penetrating to the

impulse which made him ask the question, returned, "Thou sayest it because I am a king." In effect, the Master was saying: You can see in your prisoner of to-day, with this purple robe, this crown of thorns, a Master who, though esteemed not of this world, is a man as never was before; never have you looked upon a man like this: thou sayest it because thou seest that I am a king.

Keeping closely to the natural and instinctive feeling of this man who looked upon Jesus for the first time, let me introduce you to the most pressing religious question of to-day. All religious controversy seems for the moment to have concentrated upon one sacred head. The question of questions at the present hour is: Who was and is Jesus Christ? I am proud and glad to think that so many men come with open minds to listen to that question who do not ordinarily frequent the courts of the Lord. Some of you think you have made up your mind upon the question, and that, in doing so you have dethroned the Master from the place where superstition has placed Him. You will have to come back again and reopen the question. "Behold the man!" and then tell me what you think of the Christ.

Some of you feel the difficulty of accounting for the Master while retaining the halo of the supernatural around His head. One sometimes hears men say, "How easy it would be to account for Jesus, yea, and to render Him the first place in the estimation of mankind, if only we could strip away from Him all the adjuncts of a false and mistaken piety; if we could say, Here is a man, but only a man, one of ourselves, a great and a good, but still only a man." There is a difficulty

felt about the dual personality. Sometimes one hears a young fellow say: "How could this man pray to God and be God; exhort Himself, call upon Himself, love, trust, and adore Himself? If Jesus and the Father were one, how are we to account for the personality of Jesus Himself? for that also appears to be one." True. Another difficulty is presented: "Would it not be easier to say that Jesus of Nazareth, the victim of Jewish hate, ran the course that all goodness does in this world? men crucify their prophets. Did not Jesus die a martyr to the beautiful testimony He bore to the goodness of our Father in heaven? was not His gospel the occasion of His death? and at the last did not He, in common with all the suffering sons of men, the best as well as the worst, cry in agony from the Cross of Calvary: 'My God, my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Is it not true that His bones are mouldering into dust in Palestine to-day,

"And on his grave, with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down"?

Oh, simplify the matter at once, and let us say, Here was a man, the greatest of men, the noblest of men, the purest of men, one who has given us vision of God, but still only a man."

Wait a little. What is a man? Let us settle that question first. The difference between man and man is all but infinite. The difference between a Robespierre and a Cromwell, for example, in moral stature, is immeasurable. The difference between a Charles Peace and a Charles Spurgeon cannot be expressed as comparison, only as contrast. The difference between a Voltaire and a Wesley is all but infinite. "Only a

man"—but it makes a great difference which man. "Only a man"—suppose it was Gladstone; no building in this land or in any other land would hold the people who would flock to see him and love and adore. Some men stand far above their fellows; you cannot think of them without looking up; their humanity towers up and up until it is lost in divinity and indistinguishable therefrom.

"Only a man"? I will paint you a picture which is perfectly true. Not far from these doors, so Hall Caine tells us, there are gambling hells and drinking dens—clubs they call them, of one kind and another—where degraded men, like harpies, like devils, are preying upon their kind, luring the youth of both sexes to destruction, and doing it for gain, selling others, body and soul, and damning their own in the process. "Only a man"—but a man that does that is a devil. Again: Into one such den on a certain dark night there went another man, and by main force of his sanctified personality he drew out of that foul and reeking sink of iniquity one and another—a man, a woman; gave them back their manhood and their womanhood, and drew them to the God whom their life had denied. That man died, after a life spent in saving; he died because, some wise people tell us, he had worked too hard to better the lot of humanity; he died because his rescue work had killed him. Now we speak of him as a saint. Thousands followed him to the tomb; on the day when he was laid to rest it was impossible almost for all those who wished to pay tribute to his memory to obtain access to the graveside. Amongst the company that stood there was one poor woman, who asked permission to lay a bunch of violets on his

coffin. He was "only a man," but to her he was a man of men; he had saved her from a fate that was worse than death; she associated him with the best she knew of heaven and of God. That woman is living; that man is dead. Can he die? "Only a man"—but that man was Hugh Price Hughes.

"Only a man." Man is a fragment of divinity, and he never can forfeit his origin. "Only a man"—but we must take each man at his real value. How much of God does a man contain? That is the way in which to measure his humanity. "Only a man"—may he never cease to be a man, too, when his manhood towers up and up till it touches God, and reveals God. We are mistaken when we try to draw any line between that humanity and the God that created it. Moreover, manhood overlaps. None of us liveth to himself, nor can, even if he wants to. You are the trustee, not only of your own life, but of other lives. When you refuse to serve, you are serving all the same, causes bad or good. When you are standing for the wrong you are struggling against the right, and lives you never saw are the worse for the life you are living. Every man sends the roots of his being deep into the total life of humanity. Here are we, a great company, representatives of all humanity that has ever been or ever lived. What I say of the congregation as a whole, I say of the weakest and the least influential man in it. In a sense, all humanity has come to a focus in you; in a sense, God has spoken to humanity through what you are. We cannot cover much of the territory of another man's being, but we cover some, and you measure the greatness of a man's manhood by the amount that he is able to do for lives other than his

own. How much of God have you brought to bear upon the total life of humanity? Now, judged by the standard that we have been raising, how much of God did Mr. Gladstone bring into the life of England? "Only a man"—but I do not wish to separate him from what I know of God. How much did Mr. Spurgeon bring, how much did Dr. Parker bring, how much did Hugh Price Hughes bring? "Only a man"—cease talking about mankind as though it were something different from Deity. The difference between man and God is a difference not in kind, but in moral height. From the side of God there is no line drawn between humanity and Deity at all.

Now this will help you when you come to deal with such questions as that now before us. Jesus is only a man, but He is the Man of men; Jesus has enfolded humanity. His is the only life that you can say covers the whole territory of humanity. None other could have spoken as Jesus did without blasphemy. He stood for God when He looked at men, and those who stood nearest to Him were compelled involuntarily to ask themselves: "What manner of man is this? Never man spake like this man; He has the words of eternal life." We have read in our lesson this morning of the feeling with which the disciples, even him whom we are accustomed to call the doubter, regarded One whom they addressed as Master and Lord. Do you think that the disciples who first saw Christ thought of Him as you and I think of Him to-day? Nothing of the sort. Their creed was never imposed from without, it sprang from within. Before ever Church Councils were heard of, disciples were putting into life and practice what they knew of God through

Jesus Christ. "Master and Lord," they called Him. "Ye say well, for so I am," He replied. "Master and Lord," but "only a man." "Shew us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." "I and My Father are one."

The vision of God which Jesus brought to these men in the upper room, which changed all their life, their history, their character, their conduct, holds for all time. The worst man as well as the best recognises it. When you think of God you are really thinking of the character of Jesus enthroned at the heart of the universe. You never can dissociate the two. All you know or think you know of the Father you have seen in looking into the face of the Son. Put theology from you; let the Man stand for his full value as you draw it from the New Testament; and when you have asked yourself the question, "What think ye of Christ?" can it be that you can answer in any other terms than those of the doubter when he saw Him again—the very same, the Jesus of Galilee, "My Lord and my God"? The humanity of Christ rises up—not that He had to climb there, He was there—until it becomes Deity to us, and we cannot, if we would, separate our conception of the humanity of Christ from our confidence in His Godhead.

This is a matter of simple, every-day experience. Let me state it in another way. Supposing you had never heard of such a man as Christ, reigning for and through and over humanity, humanity would be asking for Him to-day. This is exactly what you are looking for. We have never seen a Man but once. I have seen many attempts at manhood, but I have never seen a Man save in the New Testament. "Behold the

man"—the only one. When I have said that, like Thomas, I have cried out, "My Lord and my God." Fulness of the stature of manhood brings me God, all the God I am capable of receiving, and still the Christ, who is the Humanity of God, is looking up into the face of the Father. To all eternity it must be so. Down with your metaphysics, lift the devotion of the heart—our Man to all eternity, our King, our Master, our Gateway into God, our God.

That this has been echoed in all experience when it has reached its highest needs no proof. Now I want to make an appeal on the strength of it. There are men in this church who think less of Christ than I do; and the reason we are here this morning is to try to make you think as we do. Supposing Pilate and Thomas could have met and joined hands, and Pilate in a moment of penitence could have said: "I have by my cowardice slain a man, the grandest man I ever saw." And Thomas could have answered: "True, you did, and I loved that man, loved him so that I wanted to go and die with Him, but I deserted Him and fled in His moment of need. We are both criminals, Pilate, you and I; let us join hands. I have discovered something for you, I have seen Him; He is my Lord and my God. He and He only it is who is the answer to my need and the Saviour from my sin." There was a new experience born then; the perfect humanity was discovered that redeemed ours.

"If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man, I say,
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave away.

“ But if Jesus Christ is God,
 And the only God, I swear,
 I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
 The earth, the sea, and the air.”

For that Saviour has never failed mankind. The experience that was born in the upper room, in the ejaculation compelled from the breast of a man who loved and thought he had lost his Lord, has never failed humanity since, has never been absent. Observe that the greatest holiness, the grandest nobleness, the sublimest achievement of humanity at its best, has been associated with that view of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. We are asking daily for a Saviour, in sin and in sorrow, and in human problems and in human need, and the Christ who, nineteen hundred years ago, was so precious to men has still power to compel the adoration and trust and love as none of the sons of men has ever done or can do.

“ Only a man.” Now, put Gladstone beside this Man; put Hugh Price Hughes beside this Man; put Charles Haddon Spurgeon beside this Man, and Joseph Parker in his dying moment beside this Man, and listen what they have to tell you. The first-named preacher, dying, said: “ Put on my coffin, ‘ Thou, O Christ, art all I want.’ ” And the last said: “ My love to my Jesus all the time.” Galilee does not hold Him now, nor can; and no tomb was ever invented that could enclose the Christ, and death could not enchain Him. He lives. Because He lives humanity shall never die. It is pleading at the throne of God.

“ The healing of His seamless dress
 Is by our beds of pain ;

We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

“ Through Him the first fond prayers are said,
Our lips of childhood frame ;
The last low whispers of our dead
Are burdened with His name.

“ We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down ;
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown ;

“ But warm, sweet, tender, even yet,
A present help is He,
And faith has still its Olivet
And love its Galilee.”

Here is a stupendous fact, never to be explained away. For this Jesus in whom we trust conquers. Come, you who don't believe in Him, is it Jesus? If not, who is it? If we are believing in a lie that still conquers, that makes men holy, but a lie all the same—then God help us; for the whole universe is wrong. But it is not wrong. “ Behold the Man that sitteth upon the throne.”

VI

GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN

He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

—2 Cor. v. 21.

LET us attempt a retranslation and a paraphrase of that passage. The translation first, and following the order of the clauses in the Greek—"Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin in our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The text gains a little in clearness of statement and in force by this way of arranging its clause and the substitution of words. Now the paraphrase: "By the will of God, Christ can so deal with human sin that the responsibility for it can as it were be transferred from us to Him, and that we, being freed from the burden of guilt, may rise into the righteousness of God, which is already His."

That is a stupendous thing to say. If my reading of the text be right, we are justified in saying that in these few words we have a complete statement of the Christian doctrine of atonement. I know of no other sentence on the same subject in the New Testament which says so much in so few words as this wonderful sentence written from the experience of St. Paul. I am well aware that this passage, and kindred passages dealing with this subject in the New

Testament, are a standing difficulty to many minds, religious and non-religious, both in the pew and in the pulpit. I have known preachers to say that they felt a great difficulty in preaching the Atonement, because they were not able to find a place for it in their own experience, and I remember once being told by a brother minister about a layman (permit the word) of high character and influence in the Church, who said to him, after a sermon on the doctrine of the Atonement, "I wish I could go with you in what you have said, but I do not really feel that I need a doctrine of Atonement; I have tried to live for the greater part of my days as well as I knew how, I have dealt justly with my fellows, and I think I love Jesus Christ, who is Lord of All, but I would love Him just as much if you never preached any doctrine of Atonement at all, and really it has no significance for me." Probably you will think that the speaker must have been in type a Pharisee. He was not. He was a good man. I have known many to say, "I admire the Christian ethic. It stands first, it appeals to the human conscience, it is the ideal for individual manhood; but this doctrine is not ethical, and it is not reasonable. In fact, it is immoral to ask any other being to bear my sins."

If there be any persons here of this way of thinking, my words are not, in the first place, intended for you, and yet I should wish them to appeal to you, too. They are intended for those who are conscious that nothing but the Christian evangel of the Atonement can reach their experience, and what I should like the rest of you to do is to arrange yourselves alongside the sinner, and try to see with his eyes and feel with his heart; then

see whether there be not something in the Gospel of the Cross of Christ that you never saw before. I am speaking to those, then, who are conscious of moral failure when I say this—that the Atonement, in a very real sense, is the whole of Christianity. Take it away and you have nothing left, no Gospel and no evangel. This is a strong statement, and requires justification. You shall have it.

To begin with, it is often said that, nowadays, men do not appear to exhibit the sense of sin as they did in an earlier day. We read about the thousands who flocked to hear the fiery eloquence of George Whitefield, and we are told that with strong crying and tears they entered the kingdom of God, convinced that His message of the Saviourhood of Christ, the atonement wrought by Him, was the first and most necessary thing for every man who would enter into eternal life. Some of you are old enough to remember when Mr. Spurgeon first came preaching in the great metropolis. The same thing took place. If ever there was an uncompromising preacher of the Cross, it was Mr. Spurgeon, and men came in multitudes to that Cross, believing in the Gospel of a crucified Saviour as the first necessity to their spiritual being. Was it not Mr. Gladstone who said that he noticed since that day a certain decrease in the sense of sin? That humble-minded statesman, grand Christian man as he was, deplored this tendency, and declared that the first thing preachers of the Gospel ought to address themselves to was the task of awakening the sense of sin. Dr. R. W. Dale said he feared the difference between a past generation and this was largely to be comprised in the fact that men do not now fear God; they speculate about

Him instead. Be this as it may, I am rather inclined to question the statement that the sense of sin is feeble than it used to be. Admitting that there are thousands and tens of thousands in London who care nothing at all about religion or Christ, I am perfectly sure I am within the mark when I say that both within and without the Church there are more men with a burning sense of sin than any preacher or all preachers put together will reach within the next week. The sense of sin has changed its mode of expression; but it is not gone; it is real and burning, and the need to which it gives rise is as great as ever.

Let me try to illustrate. There sits in the City Temple this morning a man of high repute, perhaps, in the metropolis; he has everything that this world can give him, humanly speaking. He is rolling in wealth, he is a man of great personal influence, with power over the bodies and minds of men. You call him fortunate, perhaps you envy him a little; there may be some here who would wish to change places with him. Do not wish it any more. He is suffering the tortures of hell, and this is the reason why. Years ago, when he was first climbing to success, he married a young wife, who loved him above all else in this world, and he was willing to give her everything in return but kindness. He treated her cruelly, brutally, with that coldness which is worse than hate; he broke her heart and he killed her. Now he is drawing towards the evening of life, when he has obtained everything he ever tried for, he finds how little it is worth, and he wishes that the tender grace of a day that is dead might come back again to him. That man is as much a murderer as any criminal who was executed in England this week. Pity

him; do not denounce. The horror of the situation is this: Whether there be any Gospel, any Christ, any God, or no, he is doomed to torture until the grave closes over him. Conscience has told him something, and nothing will rid him from that dread enemy. What do you make of that? You may give it what name you please, but it is the sense of sin, even though it be awakened by only one dread fact in the past life. Sin is not only a Bible word, not only a pulpit word; it is a newspaper word, a Stock Exchange word, a Fleet Street word, and the thing for which it stands is a very present experience in the life of every man and woman. You know, without preachers, what it is to suffer because of sin—your own or other people's.

Now, take another instance. Here is a man whose lot of life is so different from him whom I have described that there can be no comparison between them; there can only be contrast. This man started life high in the social scale. He has come down, and done it by his own fault. He has flung away his opportunities; He has destroyed the peace of those who loved him best. It may be that he has broken his mother's heart, and brought down his father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. Mark him as he sits near you, shabbily dressed, unkempt, hopeless-looking, the fire in his eye dimmed, his manhood gone. If you were to talk to such a man about sin, he might be impatient, but if you tell him that he has made his bed, and must lie on it, he will bow his head in shame, for he knows that it is true. What do you call that? If there never were a preacher of the Gospel, there is something worth preaching to in that man.

Close by him is another. You have pitied the poor

unfortunate; here is one whom you may pity more. He is cursed with success, in that the foundation of that success was laid in falsehood. Years ago he got his first opportunity by telling a black lie; he has succeeded, but if he could just put the clock back, and start again, he would give you all his success. You would be welcome to it, but he cannot get rid of the success. Other people are concerned beside him. He would not care to publish to the world—and it would be no use to publish—what he was and what he is. He keeps away from churches, and he has nothing to do with religion, for he won't play the hypocrite. He feels perfectly helpless. That which is done is done, that which is written is written, and he is a miserable man to-day.

With another instance, I cease illustration, for my point is almost complete. There is another here who fights a battle with a propensity the very existence of which is humiliation. He won a victory this morning over his Apollyon, but he knows that to-morrow morning the battle has to be fought over again. He is wrestling with a demon the existence of which none of his friends suspect. Oh, pity the man with a foul and secret sin! He knows what it is to be wretched, and his cry of despairing agony sometimes rises up to a seemingly silent heaven. Is there any help for such as he? All these things may exist. In every case it is the sense of sin, without much thought of God. This is a remarkable thing, but it is true. Men can be tortured by conscience without thinking whence conscience comes; and, yet, when they do associate it with the thought of God, they become at first more dreadful, and afterwards more hopeful. When they say, as poor David

said after his great fall, "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned," there, though perhaps they suspect it not, is the first dawning of deliverance. Dr. Parker, in his pulpit, once gave, in his dramatic fashion, a description of sin that I have never heard equalled—it makes one shiver to think of it. It was a raised hand, a clenched fist, and a blow in the face of God. God has to do with the conscience, whether you know it or not, and if conscience be not always the voice of God, it certainly is in the cases I have detailed. Sin is a fact, and the consciousness of sin is a fact, and these things give rise to a great problem, a dual problem, which I shall set before you—first, the demand for release from association with the fact of sin; secondly, the opportunity for living the higher life.

I. The awful thing about sin is not the punishment it entails, but the guilt that it brings. And yet I would not make light about the punishment. The man who speaks bravely and boldly about bearing his own burden, and the penalty of his own sin, is talking of he knows not what. You cannot offer to bear the penalty of your own sin. There is no ratio between sin and punishment. If you were penitent to all eternity, you would be as guilty as you are this morning. Punishment does not take away sin; you remain associated with the fact just the same. Moreover, nobody can be punished for your sin—no, not Christ. There is not a passage in the New Testament which tells you that Jesus was punished instead of you. He could not be, for He had not sinned. What my text tells you is that He suffered instead of you, and that is where the redemption consists. Again, repentance which is repentance in fear of punishment is unworthy of the name;

it is something else, I trow, that in every case is really at the bottom of the feeling. You want to get rid of associations with sin, but that is just what the world does not believe you ever can; it is a seemingly impossible thing. It is an extraordinary fact that the most difficult thing for any preacher to do is to convince a man of the world that there is forgiveness at all.

“ The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
 Moves on : nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.”

Yet somehow the human heart protests against that dread sentence, and the cry is continually going up from the victim of propensity. “ Oh, for some power to come into my life and save me from being what I am, and thinking what I think, and doing what I do ! ” and a cry still more agonising from the man who has sinned away his opportunities. “ Oh, that that which has been might be as though it never had been ! Oh, that I could wake and find that the past was a dream, and gone forever ! ”

II. There is the demand which arises for a new opportunity for a higher life. This again is most difficult to believe. The verdict of society is against it, the testimony of all experience is against it. Perhaps in the pew beside you there sits a woman who has sinned away her purity. Observe how society treats her. I do not say society is wrong; it has to protect itself, and this is the verdict of conscience upon sin that she knew was sin when it was committed. But how hopeless it seems for her to try to live a higher life ! Her sisters may pose as patterns of probity, they

may become influences for good in the world, and their children may look up to them with hope and confidence; but she must not pose as anything but a humble penitent all her days. The Magdalen must never try to be the saint, or society will remind her that, after all, she is only a sinner. The worst penalty of sin is to be shut off and shut down from the attainment of holiness; it seems out of character for certain kinds of experience to attempt. And then there is a man here who sinned against society, and society found him out and then cast him out. Let him try to get back. He talks about a chance for a higher life. Where does the chance come in? I do not say society is wrong, but it is certain to point the finger at him forever while he moves in and out amongst men. We say to one another, That is the man who stole in such a year, and got three months, or a year, or five years, as the case may have been. Talk about the higher life for him! Let him appear in a pulpit, and see what you will do with him. The evil deed will cling to him all his days. Yet the cry is going up, "Cannot I have the chance to live the nobler life that I once had the opportunity for, and sinned away?" There is a paper in existence, of which you may have heard, called *T. P.'s Weekly*. I got it a while ago to read a certain article in it on George Eliot. I think it was the best article on that gifted authoress I ever read. The writer of the article said that one thing was constant in George Eliot's psychological writings—her insistence upon the Nemesis of justice. She never seemed to give a gleam or a glimmer of hope. Take her Hetty Sorrel, in "Adam Bede." Poor Hetty was more a fool than a sinner—a sinner because a fool. George Eliot trampled upon her,

crushed her, broke her; from the first page to the last you don't see that there is the slightest offer of relief, not a word for poor Hetty. Now, who was Hetty? I think we are justified in supposing that it was George Eliot herself, and her verdict upon her own sin is written large in her books. She did not believe in the new opportunity or the higher life. She believed that you must dree your weird, take your punishment, and, once you have taken it, be condemned to the lower plane forever. She makes one of her characters say, in words that are a wail, "It is not worth doing wrong for—nothing ever is in this world." Here, then, is the demand of the sinful heart and conscience. Let me see if I can meet it.

Your sin can be taken from you as though it had never been. The Gospel that we have to preach is the declaration of Christ's power of so dealing with your sin that it is His, and not yours. Permit me an exaggeration for the moment. There are some truths so big that you cannot state them until you use hyperbole. It is as though you were to say, "I am not guilty; the Sinless One is." So complete is the deliverance that its moral value is undoubted, instantaneous; a man can stand straight up on his feet and say, justified in the sight of God, "My redemption has meant the passion of Deity; my Redeemer has the assets of my character. My broken life is His, and the way of opportunity has opened before me because of the holiness of Christ, as well as His passion."

Why don't I explain it? I cannot; nobody can. I have my ideas about it which no theory could ever exhaust. "Him who knew no sin God made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness

of God in Him." God is not reconciled to us by the suffering of Deity; there is no passage in the New Testament which says so. We are reconciled to God; and, from the first page of the New Testament to the last, the Gospel of reconciliation is the theme of the Master and the prophet and the apostle alike. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto us our trespasses. If ever there was a Gospel which just met the need that human experience most needs it is that Gospel of the Cross of Christ. Let those who have sinned sin no more. The death of Christ is not an excuse for human sin; nay, it is God's verdict upon it. The Eternal Righteousness spake in the suffering of the innocent when Jesus died on Calvary, but it means that you were set free, as free as the best of humankind, and the blackest sinner may become the brightest saint. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It would be impossible to exaggerate the moral value of that Gospel; and that cannot be untrue which has such moral results. There are some men who would remain bad all their lives if they were not assured of such an emancipation as this. You stand away from your sin, and between you and it is a great gulf fixed. Then begins the possibility of holiness; then, and not till then. That Gospel justifies itself by results; and said I not well in declaring that the Atonement is there, the whole of Christianity? It is its beginning and its end.

I appeal now to two orders of experience—the first, that mentioned at the beginning—the man who sees no need for that Gospel in his own case. Have you

is—what is that but paying our penance

seen a need for it in anybody else's, now? If you feel that you are superior to it, that the Christ is dear to you without it, perhaps some day you will see for your own sake deep into the mystery, and find that you cannot do without the Crucified. But, whether that day ever comes or not, will you stand alongside the sinner now, and, in the sweet simplicity of the Master Himself, be prepared to affirm it for those who do need it?

“Doubtful, where I fain would rest,
 Frailest where I seem the best,
 Only strong for lack of test,
 What am I that I should press
 Special pleas of selfishness,
 Coolly mounting into heaven,
 On my neighbour unforgiven?”

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” We have not only to preach the Christ of the Resurrection morning, but the Christ who agonised on Calvary, and at that point we touch a mystery so great that it would take eternity to explain, and it is necessary for every soul of man born into the world.

The second order of experience—need I appeal to you? You are low down—get up! You feel in despair—there is no place for despair; for the Christ is Master of all moral records, as well as of the world of moral standards. You feel the remorse which comes from having lived a wrong life. Remorse is not repentance. Lay hold upon eternal life. There is a way for you into the highest, and that way lies past the Cross of Jesus Christ. Amen!

VII

THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.

—Isaiah xliii. 2.

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.—John xvi. 20.

EVERY generation has its own way of looking at the facts of life, and its own peculiar habits of thought. No man can absolutely escape the influence of the intellectual and spiritual climate of the times in which he lives, nor can he avoid asking the questions which the conditions of his time create, and which other men are asking also. There is probably no question more characteristic of our generation than that which we have styled the mystery of pain. In one sense it is a question that is very old; in another and larger sense it is a question that is absolutely new; it is as old as human sorrow, and it is as new as the experience of the youngest man. When we think of experience—the experience into which we are born, the experience we make for ourselves—we are sometimes inclined to aver that the question of the mystery of pain never was so intense as it is at the present hour, and certainly there is no question which is more characteristic of our own day and generation.

I will give some reasons why I believe the question is for us to-day so much larger than it has ever been in the history of the world. Within the memory of some

the problem did not exist, at any rate, in its intensity was not so present in fact to the minds of men, though it was always in a degree assumed in their experience and intercourse. For example, that gifted lady, Frances Power Cobbe, in her "Recollections," states that she can remember how unmercifully, when she was a child, both animals and children were flogged and variously ill-treated by those who had them in charge; not universally, but so generally that it never excited much surprise. We are aware, too, that such creations of Dickens as Mr. Squeers and Mr. Creakle could scarcely exist to-day; and such institutions as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (to adhere to the same line of illustration) are comparatively modern. To our immediate forefathers the problem of pain, which is largely the result of human sympathy, did not exist in such a degree as it exists for us.

To go a few generations farther back. In the time when Puritanism was in its grandeur—and, if Lord Macaulay is to be believed, Puritanism produced the noblest type of character that has ever been produced in any country and in any age—we notice a certain grimness about the noblest of the men who represented it, say, in the seventeenth century, and, though less conspicuously, in the sixteenth, too. Going to Reformation days, the character of Sir Thomas More has variously been commented upon, Catholic though he were, for this reason, amongst others, but this one is always given, that he was a kind and affectionate father, who treated his children with tenderness more like that of a friend than of a parent. We sometimes speak about the good old times; well, there were times in this country when grandeur of character was per-

haps more conspicuous than it is to-day, but it is perfectly certain that the sensitiveness and sympathy and perplexity in the presence of the problem of pain did not exist in previous ages of this country as they exist for our experience at the present hour.

When we go to other civilisations than our own, and especially those which have played a great part in the making of the civilisation in which we live—take, for example, that of ancient Greece, which is in some sense typical and in other sense unique—we find that the problem is present to the thinkers and poets who expressed the spontaneous feeling of the men of their days. But, while the Greek tragic poets could write eloquently about the question of pain and of human woe, which they attributed to the jealousy of the gods, we notice one very conspicuous difference between their way of looking at the question and the way in which we look at it to-day. For a statement of that difference I would refer you to the works of Dr. Martineau, who, in his “Hours of Thought,” points out what I suppose we all know now—that between the civilisation of ancient Greece and that of to-day there is this difference, that in the one pity for the weak, oppressed, and unfortunate is largely absent, and in the other, with all its faults, these things do exist, and increasingly so. There were no hospitals in ancient Greece, no homes for the poor, no orphanages, no institutions for the lessening of human woe; there were no protests against war. I think that in the last war very largely the strength of what we, for want of a better name, have called the pro-Boer agitation in this country came from the Christian hatred of war in general. In ancient Greece that did not exist. With all

their love of beauty and of human perfection as they conceived it, the Greeks, while they talked about pain, had very little sympathy for those who endured it; and, therefore, between them and us there is a great gulf fixed in the statement of the problem. In our case it is new, larger, more intense than it was in theirs.

Before passing from this line of illustration, I think I ought to mention the Oriental religions, which have been founded upon a perception of human pain. The greatest of these, Buddhism, which includes a larger number of adherents than Christianity, came into existence simply and solely through a perception of the fact that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. How did Orientalism settle the question? By a selfish individualism which, for the sake of its own future and escape from a dismal present, taught obedience to something like the Christian law of love, but which, when we examine it, is exceedingly unlike it. Buddhism has no God, no future; its solution of the problem of pain is a solution which was a dismal pessimism, and is to-day. There is no answer to the question given in Orientalism, which presents, on the one hand, the extreme of ignoble quiescence, and, on the other, of insensate cruelty.

Now, how is it that we are thinking about it, say, within the last fifty years, in such a degree? There are several reasons, first, amongst which I place this, that we have discovered the solidarity of human existence with that of the creation at large. Another is this: We have, through years of ease and tranquillity, comparatively speaking, come to feel how arduous was the existence in which our fathers lived, and with our increased sensibility has come increased sympathy and

susceptibility to the problem of pain. Is it not true that with increase of knowledge, in our case, has, in some degree, come increase of sorrow, too? The more capable a man is of reflecting, the more capable he is of suffering. Increased culture means increased capacity for woe.

“ We look before and after
And sigh for what is not ;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught.
Our sweetest songs are those that tell
Of saddest thought.”

I have a further reason for believing that this sensibility of which I speak—a sensibility greater in this generation than in any other—is due to the cumulative effect of the Christian Gospel. But, because there may be some man who will not agree with me, I simply state that point, and leave it without attempting to demonstrate it. I declare that if there had never been a Christ in the world, and if you had never heard of Him, and if there had been no men to live the Gospel, your statement of the great problem of human ill would have been no different from that of ancient Greece or of Oriental Buddhism. The difference has been made in sensibility by the influence of the spirit of Christ in the community in which we live. In a sense, then, our statement of the problem of pain has been given to us by Christ, and, were it not for Jesus Christ, the problem would not exist for us as it does. If Christ creates the problem, where shall we look for the solution but in Christ?

We go on now to state the ways in which the problem shapes itself to our mind. First, I think the

problem of pain has for us a greater range and intensity than it ever had before, because, as I have already said, we have discovered our oneness with the rest of creation. We no longer speak as if the world were made for man, and for man alone. That would be a conceited, ignorant, and narrow view. Moreover, if the world exists for man alone, and no other sentient life has a claim as against ours, then, indeed, there is something wrong with our moral nature; for we reserve our pity for suffering only when it affects ourselves, and yet we perceive that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, too. Within the last fifty years we have found out that in the struggle for existence some of the lower forms of sentient life are as heavily handicapped as we. John Stuart Mill has rightly said that, in truth, the very things for which we reprobate, hang, and imprison one another are Nature's everyday performance. Recently I happened to be riding over the Brighton Downs, and scared away some little creature—a weasel or stoat, or something of that kind—from its prey. I came upon the scene without knowing exactly what was going on. Before I could check my horse he had placed his hoof on a little bird that was lying dying, and crushed out the last spark of life. I could not help thinking, as I took the poor little thing into my hand, Here is an epitome of the problem of pain. If this were the only example in the wide universe of life ruthlessly destroyed, of fear and anguish, surely in the problem of the sufferings of this little feathered creature is the whole question of pain as it affects me and the rest of humanity. If I could say anything about the reason for the suffering of that little bird, I should have some-

thing to say about the reason for the suffering of men, and, conversely, if I can see any reason in the suffering of men, there is something that I can safely leave in the hands of God in so far as the suffering of the bird is concerned.

We notice, too, the apparent indiscriminate incidence of pain, and its apparent meaninglessness in operation. Take that disaster in the West Indies in 1902, by which, within the space of a few minutes, 30,000 people were hurled into eternity—more than fell altogether in the long dreary months of the South African War. We cannot understand how it was that good and bad alike, apparently, in that doomed city, as in Sodom and Gomorrah, were swept out of existence by this awful cataclysm. One pathetic incident I remember reading in the newspapers was this: At the bedside in one of the houses that was entombed by the lava and ashes from Mont Pelée a lady was kneeling saying her prayers. She was not anticipating the catastrophe; she was praying to God for blessing, and apparently His answer was to overwhelm her in destruction. Perhaps in the next street from her was a man who had been living in debauchery. Good and bad alike, they went to a common doom, and went without a word of warning, without time to think or to appeal to the great Being who had done it all. The apparent meaninglessness and indiscriminateness of the operation of pain make the problem larger to us.

But, again, and closer to our experience, is this: it strikes at the noblest part of our nature. That man feels most who is the best man. The man who is noblest is the man who is most capable of suffering. Dr. Parker said on more than one occasion from this

pulpit : Preach to the broken hearts ; the man who does that is always sure of a congregation, for there is at least one in every pew. He may have been right, he may have been wrong, but this is certain, that in a congregation of the size of this present one there are some whose noble nature has been wounded, who, if they had been less capable of unselfish feeling, would have been less capable of sorrow than they are to-day. The man who is able to love unselfishly and has been treated with ingratitude, the man who is able to give himself in loving sacrifice for another, and whom death robs of the nearest and the dearest, knows something of the problem of pain which is altogether hidden from the man who lives for himself, to eat, drink, and be merry, defying the death that comes to-morrow. So the problem is larger because it strikes the very noblest part of human nature, and is felt most keenly there.

Lastly, in this statement of the way in which this problem shapes itself to our mind, oftentimes it seems as though, if joy has slain its thousands, sorrow has slain its ten thousands. Where you find a man who cannot bear prosperity, and who has been destroyed by it, you are sure to find another who has been unable to bear adversity, and has been made bitter by it. Suppose there is only one man in this congregation whose life has been ruined, for whom the whole creation has been darkened, not through his own fault, but because of a calamity undeserved, and it has turned him bitter and made him to protest against the order of the universe—can you wonder at it? If that man alone were here the problem exists for him, and he would feel, as many of us do, most likely, in our sympathies with suffering humanity, that there was some-

thing of reason in Coulson Kernahan's way of stating the question when, in one of his little books, he makes the whole human race come together and utter a challenge against God. For in the statement of the mystery of pain we are really lifting up our faces in challenge to the Most High, asking for some explanation of the mystery. For we cannot put the blame entirely upon man. No matter how much man is to blame, there is pain anterior to his moral responsibility, pain beneath it, pain beyond it. The problem of pain is greater than the range of human moral depravity.

Now I come back to this point at which we started. We must look for answer just at the place already indicated—the Cross of Jesus Christ—for this reason, if for none other, that it is through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the problem in its present form has emerged in our day for the non-Christian as well as for the Christian man. But we can narrow the range a little, by pointing out that we have nothing to do for the moment with the problem of pain as it affects the lower creation; if we can settle the problem satisfactorily in so far as it affects ourselves we can leave the rest for the time being in the hands of the God to whom we have successfully appealed.

Further, I would point out that the problem of pain gains something to-day from the large part which our imagination plays in it. That catastrophe in the West Indies, for instance, is not so large as you think it is, and in another sense it is going on at this moment, as largely as it ever did. For the whole of the pain ever suffered by humanity since time began is not greater than that of the man who has been capable of suffering the most at any one time. And what man was that?

When I come to think of it, that must have been Jesus Christ and none other. When you say 30,000 people were hurled into eternity in a moment, what you mean is that 30,000 units were destroyed; and, whatever was suffered here by the man who suffered most, he suffered all. The problem of pain is not greater in immensity than it is in intensity. If you have suffered as much as any man who ever lived, the whole problem of pain is concentrated in your experience. That narrows the range at once. For now what we have to do is to ask why any one man should suffer, and, in asking why any one man should suffer, I take the man who suffered most, and if I can give any reason for his suffering I have done something to explain the mystery of the suffering of the whole creation. Here, then, opens out a principle which will help you a long way along the road to a solution; it is this:

Every human life has a three-fold value—a value for itself, a value for humanity, a value for God. Some of you will say that is fairly obvious; at least, so far as the first is concerned. No; in one sense it is not obvious at all. Its value for self—"but it is not yet made manifest what we ourselves shall be." Its value for humanity—that is obvious, for no man liveth to himself. Its value for God—how much that involves I do not know, for God's ways are in the sea, and where we live to-day is but the vestibule of the life that is to be. Its value for self—there is nothing noble, worthy, sublime in human character and achievement but has its roots in the mystery of pain. Will any man challenge that? I defy him to look upon the field of history and find any man whom the consciousness of humanity has affirmed to be noble who has not

had his discipline of struggle and pain. What is the difference between innocence and holiness? Look at that dear little child sitting beside its mother. The faces have a similarity in contour and expression, but there is a difference, too; the innocence of the one is not the mellow tenderness of the other. Something has been learned in the journey of life between innocence and nobleness—the innocence of childhood, the nobleness of womanhood. What has made the difference? The difference has been the battle of life, acquaintance with pain. Would you rather be the child or the mother? I will answer the question for you. You would rather be the mother, with the wisdom of the mother, if you could keep the heart of the child. There is the ideal of humanity. Man is at his noblest like unto a little child. Now, only once in history have we seen that perfectly done, but here and there we see it nearly approximated unto. There is a relationship between holiness and innocence which fits them for acquaintance with each other. The saint and the child are very near together, but the former has been through the furnace to learn what the child-heart is. Nowhere in the range of history have I seen aught that is noble, sublime, or holy in human character and conduct but it has its roots in the mystery of pain. Let me speak to you, especially to those who are not Christians, and perhaps do not intend to be—it is true of you, too. The finest man you know to-day, the man you would most wish to resemble, the man who has been of most service to your character, is the man who knows life in its lights and shades, pleasures and pains, sorrows and joys. You do not want to feel that he is shallow; and, if he is not, it is because he has been through the waters,

and knows something of the bitterness as well as the pleasantness of life—for life is not all pain. Joy is purchased by acquaintance with pain, and in the highest joy is latent an experience of pain. Human instinct tells us that must be true.

There is the pain which is the direct result of wrongdoing. While I admit that this does not explain the whole of the existence of pain, it explains, perhaps, what somebody here present feels to have been the most perplexing part of his experience. Here is a man with the mark of Cain upon his brow; he looks sadly out upon life because of what might have been; the tender grace of a day that is dead will never come back to him. If I could only remove the punishment of your sins, the problem of pain would cease to exist for you. Then listen to this. So soon as I look upon Jesus Christ for a solution, so soon there comes home to me a message of hope. For I cannot believe in punishment which is merely retributive; I do not think such a thing exists. When God writes His verdict upon sin, in the pain that must be borne, then I see hope for the soul that is punished. He punishes that He may save. Punishment is warning, awakening, calling back to God, and, if you will, the curse may become the Cross. I go beyond this. I see that pain is that which deepens human nature in such wise that even sympathy with joy is only possible through sympathy with pain. You cannot enjoy, and you have not come to the power of seeing others enjoy, if it be not for your acquaintance with the opposite of joy. I do not know whether I ought to call pain the opposite of joy. There is not in our language a word to express sympathy with joy. And yet the word has just been employed, which is a

wrong one, because there is not a right one. That word sympathy merely means "suffering with." We have no word for "joying with"; if there were, it would be something like "with-joicing"—how shall I with-joice with any man unless I first with-pain with him? To sympathise with joy we need to sympathise with sorrow. I now come to a point where language is not big enough to tell all that I mean. That which is best in human nature and experience depends, first of all, upon your acquaintance with the great mystery of pain. Let me illustrate: the Mayor of Brighton gave a children's fancy dress ball, and 1000 little people went to take part in it. Parents were privileged to be present in our two largest buildings—the Dome and the Corn Exchange—to see the little ones file through them, and I went because I had a stake in the concern. I noticed this, and it was an exceedingly pathetic sight; as the little ones came past, here and there I saw a man and a woman crying. What for? The little ones were not crying; they were just in their seventh heaven. I suppose we were, too, who were watching with full hearts. Why were the grown-up people crying as they looked at the little ones filing by? I see the answer in your faces; it is because of the sympathy with the joy of the children which was felt by the grown man, with his knowledge of the weight of the world's sorrow.

" O little feet, that such long years
Must wander on through hopes and fears,
Must ache and bleed beneath your load ;
I, nearer to the wayside inn,
Where toil shall cease and rest begin,
Am weary, thinking of your road."

We feel, when we look at the joy that is in the world, that we cannot read it as we should, we cannot enter into it as we ought, we cannot feel ourselves bound to it with ties that nothing can sunder, except we have first had our acquaintance with pain. Even love—which spells sacrifice—love presumes pain. Is there any man, be he Christian, Jew, or Atheist, who would be without the love that lightens his life? To be without the pain he must be without the love; neither can exist—nor does exist—in this world without the other; and in the next, I take it that the highest joy, the bliss unspeakable, without which we are never to be, will be that in which the experience of pain is latent, but not perceived; experienced, but not remembered. Our sorrow shall be turned into joy.

Here I come to the second part of the value of which I have spoken. Let me state the points without attempting to illustrate. Humanity is one; we take the problem in its wholeness. If any man can affirm that in general, whatever he may say of particulars, pain has proved to be a good for him—or, rather, to be careful of language, a means to a good—I ask that man where the good is going to stop. Can you be perfectly content if you realise that your brethren, the rest of humanity, are excluded from the good that you have earned? Assuredly not. Personality comes to its own only in relations. The highest joy which mankind has shown itself capable of knowing is that of vicarious suffering. Sometimes we shrink from that highest, but for those who have shown themselves capable of it there has come a great discovery, the discovery that that joy which calmly seeks that blessed-

ness is his who gives himself that others may live. Now, when I say your life has a value to humanity, it may be that God is carrying out that principle in you without consulting you. There is such a thing as vicarious experience. Who knows but that the poor man outside this church this morning, who, of another's fault and not of his own, has been moved to a suffering which you shall never share, is doing something for you? If I am unduly mystical, let me say this in support, if not in proof, of my proposition: What you are living to-day you are living for me as well as for yourself. No one like you will ever live again, and no one will live precisely your life. What you are doing, what you are suffering, is for humanity as well as for yourself. You are an end in yourself. God thinks of you as though none other had ever lived, but He thinks of you in relation to the rest, and when the great story comes to be told you will find that suffering has been giving, and that men have been giving in their pain who never knew it at all.

That brings me to the last point—that suffering is giving. That is the way in which I should like to read of God. If you could have God come again, or supposing you had never heard of Him on the plane of human history at all, and knew nothing about God except what preachers say and you yourself have thought, how would you have Him to come? If God came on the clouds of heaven, declaring Himself with great pomp and glory, I think I should shrink from the great psalm of majesty; there would be a note wanting that I should long to hear. But if God came as a fellow and as a leader, and laid Himself alongside my every experience; if God showed Himself capable of

suffering, I should feel that God had reached to the ultimate in His nature, and bound me to Him there. And so it has been. Jesus Christ has come. Jesus Christ has come to bring us to the Father; He came bearing His Cross. He leads humanity through the Via Dolorosa; when He takes us through the waters He is at our side, and it is from His lips in the hour of Gethsemane that I hear the promise, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Let me read to you the words of a Roman Catholic theologian, which strike me as being so beautifully true that they may fitly be quoted here: "Our Lord left a special blessing for those children of the first resurrection, who, being perfected in a short time, have fulfilled many times, and are taken in the unsullied freshness of their early bloom, by the wasting sickness or the baptism of blood, to behold the King in His beauty and the land that is far away. But sooner or later a crisis comes in the lives of the rest of us who linger here, when we are constrained to walk—it may be with backward step and averted eye—up the road that leads to Calvary, and the sun goes down at noon, and the stars withdraw their shining, and the Cross stands bare and cold under the darkened heavens, and we must be stretched thereon, whether we will or no. It is well for all in that hour of solitary trial who can patiently, nay, thankfully, embrace their cross as knowing that, indeed, they are not alone, but are crucified with Jesus."

Here is the secret of all highest joy, the greatest paradox in human experience—the Cross is the secret of the Crown. Without it you do not know life; without it you do not know God. Life is not all darkness, and whatever darkness there is we can defy, for even

here and now the secret of the Lord is with them that stand under the shadow of Calvary. You have nothing to fear, for it is a pierced hand that holds the sceptre of the world. In the suffering Christ is my hope of glory and of the bliss that fadeth not away. We listen with thankfulness and with confidence to His promise, given as He went forward to His own Cross, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

VIII

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth. Give us, day by day, our daily bread.—Luke xi. 2-3.

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well; but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin.—James ii. 8-9.

MANY of you must have been privileged to see some time ago the Tissot gallery of paintings, illustrative of our Lord's life and ministry. It was an interesting collection of paintings from this circumstance, if for nothing more, that the great painter who gave them to the world spent ten years after his conversion in studying on the spot in the Holy Land the conditions under which our Lord must have lived and wrought and taught. It seems to me that God must have taught the painter Himself. One of the pictures which most commanded my attention was that entitled "The Lord's Prayer." Here Tissot portrays the Master standing in the midst of His disciples, who are seated in a semi-circle around Him, like a class waiting at the knees of a teacher. The Master's hand is raised in hortatory fashion, and the disciples are evidently repeating after Him the words of the Lord's Prayer. It struck me that there, by a flash of intuition, the painter was per-

mitted in God's providence to give to the world for the first time the actual conditions under which our Lord taught His disciples to pray in those golden words. "Our Father which art in heaven," said the great Teacher. "*Our Father which art in heaven,*" repeated after Him the poor Galilean fishermen sitting side by side. "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Give us our daily bread." The kingdom of God had come when the disciples of Jesus, sitting side by side, said in company, "Our Father which art in heaven," and looking up into the face of Jesus as they said it. The world has been looking into the face of Jesus ever since as the hope of humanity, the great Teacher, Master, Guide, and Redeemer of the race. There is no problem of importance to humanity which has not some reference to the Gospel of Christ. We to-day, like the disciples of old, can say, "Lord, teach us to pray," and when we are so taught and in His spirit pray, it is for the common needs of humanity that our prayers are most urgent. "Thy kingdom come" will cover them all. But there is no man so rich in this world's goods who can afford to ignore the complementary petition, "Give us day by day our daily bread." On another occasion, as I need not remind you, the Master enunciated, not for the first time in the history of Israel, the two great commandments which are really one—

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The little group of simple men who heard Him thus speak went forth to carry the Gospel message to the world, went forth conquering and to conquer, carrying the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. If there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thank God the kingdom of God came when any man^r could once sincerely pray so. The kingdom of God has come, and come fully, when any man has given himself over to the keeping of Jesus Christ and in His spirit serves his fellows. No man can partake of the spirit of Jesus without becoming a saviour—such were Peter, James, and John, whom the Master taught to pray.

But in another sense the kingdom has not yet come. Society does not obey the voice of the Master. Nearly two millenniums have passed since that historic scene in which the Master taught His disciples to say, "Thy kingdom come," and it has not come yet. The Church has at times been unfaithful to her trust, and has affirmed that to be the whole Gospel which was only a part. We ought never to acquiesce in counsels of despair. No problem is intractable; no human want, however seemingly hopeless, is really so. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Gospel which carries the whole good of mankind, and there is no want which it cannot meet. The Church from age to age has been righting herself from time to time in these things, and if at the moment we have got out of touch with some of the most urgent needs of our day and generation, it is time that the Church came back in faithfulness to the spirit of the Lord's Prayer. Now, just at the moment it seems to me that the Church of Christ in this country is in danger of getting out of touch with the great

masses of the workers; I do not say she has done so, but I firmly believe she is in danger of doing it. The statistics which have been published by the *London Daily News* have caused much searching of heart on the part of a good many of us, and the fault is not entirely with the ministry, whatever may be the real cause of the apparent shrinkage in attendance at public worship. I do not believe that the evil is without a remedy, nor do I believe that the abstention of the masses from the service of the house of God is caused by indifference to the great themes of religion. The day will yet come—I long to see it, and hope to live to see it—when the whole nation shall be brought back to the loving service of the public worship of Almighty God. Nor do I think it is caused by indifference to the Gospel as it came from the lips of Jesus Christ. Respect for the name of Jesus never stood higher than it stands at this moment. You can enter no assembly, whatever, be it political, religious, or merely a place of entertainment, in which any sentiment derogatory to the name of Jesus would be entertained with patience. To-day the great community is filled with admiration, reverence, and love for the name of the lowly Nazarene. But at the same moment it is true they distrust those who speak in His name. The ministry is not just now of good odour in the nostrils of the masses of the people. I often feel that when I have to address working men they begin by distrusting me: they distrust my brethren of the cloth; they feel we have no real message for the deep needs of the hour. Now, the reason, or one reason, is that we have shirked our duty as a church in regard to great social problems, the struggle to live. If we have nothing to say

we have failed Christianity, Christianity has not failed us.

This problem is one which is comparatively new. Every student of history knows that in this country centuries ago and under the manorial system, whatever laws might be wrong, the problem of a livelihood for every member of a village community had not even arisen. Plague, pestilence, and famine attacked our ancestors; but if there was bread enough to go round in the manor the hungriest member of the community was entitled to his share. It is almost within the memory of some living when a modification of this system obtained in rural districts; it does not obtain now. We cannot meet, under our complex social system, with an example of a country parson like him whom Goldsmith describes, who was "passing rich on forty pounds a year"; nor can we ever expect again to see the close personal touch in the town between master and man. For with the disappearance, or the comparative disappearance, of the small tradesman is going, or has gone, the system of apprenticeship which meant some responsibility on the part of the employer for the welfare of the employed. Since 1846, and with the abolition of the iniquitous Corn Laws, certain new doctrines which have had their day have come into vogue, have done a great deal for the amelioration of society, and have brought some mischief too. The doctrine of individual liberty has been carried so far that in some relations it has become tyranny. At the present moment the social order presents certain features with which we are all familiar, each one of which raises a multitude of problems.

i.—The first is simply this—the accumulation of

capital in a few hands, the gradual extinction of the small employer, the formation of great companies, rings, combines, and trusts. In America they are feeling the pressure and the power of these great interests more than we are in England, but here the tendency is on the increase; more and more is it observable that power is being placed in the hands of a comparatively few rich men, who, whether they use it for good or for evil, have the power to use. Now, no great corporation has a soul; you never met with a conscience in a great body without an individuality. Its employees are necessarily units for the accumulation of dividends, and nothing more. I state the fact, and leave it. That tendency is on the increase, and it is one fruit of the doctrine of individualism preached so vigorously by good men like John Bright in the middle of the last century.

ii.—Another feature is the increase of the power and the activity of trade unionism. I hold no brief for trade unionism pure and simple; I believe it has been fraught with many mischiefs. One of its tendencies is to lower the level of efficiency to the ability of the least efficient worker; another has been to attempt petty tyranny over individual workers who are prepared to go further and do more than their fellows to give out what is in them to do; and the third has been the tendency to victimise the community by restricting the output, and therefore gradually lowering the level of national efficiency. Now, in these days, when the nation itself is struggling to maintain its footing amongst the nations of the earth, when our commercial supremacy (I hardly like the word) is threatened, there ought to be no influence, whether it be capital or labour,

militating against the prosperity of the community as a whole. But trade unionism was an actual necessity. If trade unionism were to disappear to-morrow, you know perfectly well what the lot of the workers would be. It is bad enough now; it was bad in the old days, when the factory system first became a power, and under such men as Cobden and Bright. What would it be under Pierpont Morgan & Co.?

Here I would point out to you a significant fact. Men of the Samuel Morley type seem to have passed away; money is accumulated in the hands of men of different mental and moral calibre. Men who are good for very little else seem to have the power of making money, and that power gives them a dominance over their fellows to which on no other ground they are entitled. To make a long statement short, the inevitable conflict between these two tendencies which I have stated—the tendency towards the accumulation of capital, and the tendency to the organisation of labour in self-defence and something more—means a certain detriment to the community in which, no matter how you try to safeguard the results, the weakest are the real sufferers.

iii.—A third feature of the present social order is one with which we have been recently familiar in London, and of which the processions of the unemployed are a symptom—the tendency to ever-recurring periods of depression, in which men, only some of whom you ever hear about at all, are deprived of the power of earning their own living. A large number of men over forty years of age are living in dread of to-morrow. It is becoming increasingly difficult in the great business houses of this metropolis for men in

middle life once out of a situation to get another. That is one fruit of our system. We attempt to meet it by sporadic efforts at charity. Charity is not a remedy, it is only an expedient. When on Christmas Day in this place you were good enough to give a collection amounting to £61, in order to feed poor children, you were doing what was done on that day all over the country, and for one part of the year at any rate the little children were clothed and warmed and fed. There is plenty of goodness of heart in the community when it is once reached. I was standing, on New Year's Day, watching one of these great dinners, when someone came up to me and said, looking at the poor little hungry feeders, "Isn't this a pathetic sight?" I said, "It is, indeed." "How long will this kind of thing be necessary?" The remark sank deep into mind and heart, for the question is one that we ought all to be asking. Why should these little children, the children of the workers, the children of the poor, have to be dependent on us at all for the bread that they eat? They have as much right to it as we have, but it is simply one feature of the system and the tendencies already described—the recurring problem of want of employment, the processions of men who tramp our streets, some of them humbugs, no doubt, who don't intend to work, but who are a symptom of distress deeper, greater, than our imagination can really comprehend.

iv.—The last feature of the present system which I shall mention is the increasing tendency to the separation of classes. Under the old system, with all its mischief, the community held the master responsible to some extent for the well-being of his employee. If

he treated him badly, all the neighbours knew it. The apprentice was a member of his employer's family, and his future was to some extent guaranteed by the character of the master himself. To-day, and in London, too, there are men who never see their employer, don't know what he is like; they will certainly never see the inside of his home, as the old apprentice used to do. The tendency is for the distance between the member of the big corporation or business house and his workers to increase, and there is a real danger in that separation of classes, a doing away of sympathy, the erection of barriers between man and man which ought not to be. To illustrate. Some time ago a member of my own church came to me and said:

"As a Christian man, I am very much troubled about my position in business life. A few years ago I was in someone else's employ, in daily dread of dismissal, like other people; I never knew when my time might come to be the superfluous hand. By a fortunate accident I obtained assistance to start for myself. Now I am a member of a great trading concern; I have capital in it, and I feel that every day I am in danger of treating men as I was once treated myself, and subjecting them to the same fear that once haunted me. I pay them the lowest rate of wages I can, for the simple reason that I must. I myself am only one in a big concern. If we pay our men more, we shall not be able to pay dividends so good as a rival concern would, and the general public is looking for dividends. What am I, as a Christian man, to do? I cannot escape from the present situation."

Perhaps you will blame me for what I said. I said, "No, you can't; you had better go on as you are; but

wherever a chance comes to you of befriending a man, do it." What we have to do is not so much to change you or your practice as to change the system. Here is where it seems to me the Church has not been perfectly clear in the lead she ought to have given. The preacher is not obliged to be a statesman: it is the statesman's business to put into practice the principles which the moral sense of the community demands; and it is the preacher's business, it is the duty of every Christian man, to see that those principles are made as clear in regard to every-day social and business life as can be. The remedy is not in levelling down; never suffer any man in your presence to say that it is. If you could take away every farthing of the Archbishop of Canterbury's salary, you would not have done anything whatever to solve the problems of the unemployed in the streets of London. No; the remedy has to be sought in applying through the moral sense of the community the principles of Jesus Christ to the public and the social life of our nation. If we do that you will find that certain principles will come out clear as the noonday, if we are honest to ourselves.

The first of these is that

(I.) Unlimited competition is wrong. There is a place for competition, but after a certain point has been reached competition becomes tyranny. If there is any man here who is mainly responsible for the future of a small business house he will know what I mean, if I use him as illustration. You go to the promoter of a big concern that is about to crush you, and say, "I cannot hold out against you. What am I to do?" "You must make over your business to me on such and such terms." "But that

means ruin to me!" "Can't help it; it's all fair; you're competing with me, and the better will win." Does it not seem a hollow mockery? The better does not win; the stronger does. In fact, the community will be more likely to lose if the big house wins than if the little one does. You are having to pay more to-day for certain commodities just because of the victory of the big concern over the little one, and yet under unlimited competition the big concern is sure to win the victory all the time. Where is the remedy? That is for you to say, member of Parliament; it is for you to say, leader of County Council, municipal organiser; that is what you are there for, not for your own interests. But if Jesus Christ stood, and he really does, where I stand this morning, He would say to you, as He said in the days of old, under other conditions, in other terms, but with the same meaning and the same principle, Unlimited competition is wrong; you have no business to crush the weak as if he had no rights against the strong.

(II.) Every man has a right to the opportunity of labouring for his bread. "Oh," you say, "that is easy to say—so easy. But who is going to find him the opportunity of labouring for his bread? Besides, has he any such right, after all, if there is no work for him to do?" Pardon me, you are begging the question. By the complexity of our social organisation we have taken away from him the power of using his hands. It is a grand principle that if a man will not work neither shall he eat, but it is a grander principle that if a man will work he should eat. I would therefore pledge the national credit on behalf of every man who is willing to use his two hands to work. Mark

you, it is the duty of the community to provide him with that opportunity, for if he were on Crusoe's island he could work, he could till the soil and reap the fruits; but just because we are so closely and complexly organised here, you have taken away from him the opportunity of so doing.

Again, the State—by which I mean you—is entitled to the full value of every citizen it rears. I am a poorer man to-day, and so are you, by virtue of every idle worker that tramps the streets; we are entitled to what he could do. You say, “But then, he has done enough, there is no work to do; over-production has settled that.” There never is over-production; there is over-proportionate production. Supposing that every man who can turn out boots and shoes could double his capacity to-morrow—would that be over-production? Yes, if he took the time from making coats. But if I can have a new pair of boots every morning, all the better, provided it does not rob me of my coat. It means that over-proportionate production is possible. Therefore what is wanted is the State organisation of labour. That does not mean that the State will take out of the hands of private individuals the duty and the opportunity of giving employment; but it does mean that when honest men, and there are plenty of them, are deprived of the opportunity of honest labour the State should find it without pauperising them.

(III.) So soon as an industry becomes a necessity for the life of a nation—shall I say even for the high prosperity of a nation—that belongs to the nation. Let me illustrate. In the coal strike in America, of which we have recently been hearing so much, a point was reached when the community felt the dread of

coming winter and no coal. President Roosevelt, the mouthpiece of the citizenship of America, spoke out clearly, and said, "While you, Capital, and you, Labour, are quarrelling, we are shivering with cold. The nation can't stand still for you. Patch up your differences quick, or we'll mine the coal." Why should not that be applied to every such question when it arises? Supposing that, in Lord Penrhyn's case, instead of slate it was coal, and supposing instead of his quarry in the particular district where he is master, he owned all the coal; you would very soon see whether we should settle that question which has been dragging on so long.

(IV.) Up to a certain point the State is responsible for the physical and moral well-being of its individual members. That is a very trite observation, but we will keep on saying it until it is attended to. We do it already in certain directions. We vaccinate the whole community, whether it likes it or not. We are quarrelling about educating them; we don't leave it to individual initiative to see whether a child is having an opportunity of learning to read. Why is it, then, that we take it for granted that the State has no duty in relation to the question of feeding the father? But it has—some day you will wonder that anybody ever questioned it at all—it has a duty. You have no right to bring up your citizen, and then leave him to sink or swim when it comes to a question of daily bread. If he will not work he should be made to; and if he will work it is your duty to see to it that he has the means of substance—which means that he is entitled to the produce of his labour. Whatever that man's value to the State, get it all; he is entitled to his place in the

State, his return from the State, because of what he gives to the State. These principles are the very body and blood of Christianity. No matter how difficult they are to put in practice, they should be declared, and as power rests with the community now, as it did not when the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first preached, we must thrust upon the community, and not upon individual churches, the duty of applying such moral principles in all their grandeur and effectiveness to the ordinary issues of human life.

I close by recalling your attention to the Author of our salvation and to the words of Jesus Himself. That is the way in which that great ministry began which has shaken the world. Our Lord's first duty was to His own. He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and opened the book, and read :

“ The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor ; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, ‘ This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’ ”

Christ is the deliverer. Don't you leave these problems to any demagogue who repudiates the Christ. Christ is the King in the kingdom that is coming. Christ is the Master of our soul, the Redeemer of our life, and there is no corner of that life which is to be left unredeemed. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this is the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

IX

THE DIVINE IDEAL OF MANHOOD*

Love is the fulfilling of the law.—Rom. xiii. 10.

JOHn the Divine is usually thought of as the Apostle of Love, and rightly so; for he who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles, which stand in the name of the same writer, had a wonderfully sweet and beautiful message to mankind from the inner mind of his Master. But I often think that the description, the Apostle of Love, belongs just as much to the great apostle of the Gentiles. I think Paul gives us in this epistle and in his other theological letters teaching as helpful, majestic, and tender as that of John the Divine himself, and on that very subject where John the Divine is considered to be master I should place St. Paul by his side. Let any man read 1 Cor. xiii., written, as it must have been, from a rich and ripe experience, written with tender feeling, with marvellous spiritual insight; and I think he will not refuse the title, the Apostle of Love, to St. Paul. Nor is this very wonderful; for the Gospel which they had preached was a Gospel in which love was placed as the guide of the virtues, the inspiration and the fulfilment of them all. Christianity is the revelation of the love of God and the inculcation of love of man.

* Preached in Union Chapel, Brighton, Sunday morning, January 18, 1903.

Its watchword is "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill amongst men."

There are three words in the Greek language, each of which has to be translated into English by the word "love." In the New Testament that which is translated "love," in the sense of Christian love, is the *agapee*. The first word, which is not mentioned, describes sexual love, the second is family affection, and the third this Christian love of which I have spoken, and which might exist in a man who did not know Christ, though it could not exist in its fulness. This word implies a reverent goodwill, in which the will of the man who loves plays the principal part. The love that we have before us here, and which the writers of the New Testament set before us on every occasion when they teach about the inner principle of Christianity, is a reverent goodwill, not only from man to God, but from man to man. Do not, I beseech you, lose sight of the point I am trying to make. The very same word which describes love to God, love from men to God, is the word which is invariably used by New Testament teachers, by the great apostle of the Gentiles, and by John the Divine, to describe the relations which should exist between man and man. Are we wrong, then, in drawing this deduction—that the same quality in reverent affection which is due from man to God is due from man to man? He that loveth another—what other?—the other who stands near him, between man and man; the other who may be God, the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother—he who loveth another hath fulfilled the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law.

In connection with this great principle, I wish to set

before you three propositions:—(1) Religion and morality are not necessarily the same thing; religion and morality have not always been found together. (2) Yet there is no man who would refuse to recognise the imperative of the moral law, even though he disobeys it. (3) In Christ religion and morality have a common ideal and a common goal.

I. Religion and morality do not necessarily involve each other. I am inclined to go so far as to say that in the history of the world religion and morality have commonly been opposed to each other. I think that was so in the world to which Paul preached. At the moment when this letter to the Romans was written Rome was the cockpit of religions. Every fad, every new cult, every evil form of belief and practice, had its representative in Rome. At the moment when St. Paul writes, religion has fallen into deep discredit with those who were disposed to take life seriously and nobly. For then, as now—though happily now we are not as we were then in everything—then as now some serious-minded men who were living nobly according to their lights refused to recognise in the competing and degraded religious faiths of the hour any guidance worthy of the homage of conscience. The State religions even, which were observed and practised by men like the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, were not revered by the people who practised them; they were simply recognised as customary, venerable, and, therefore, binding for outward observance and for the sake of social order; but as for having a relation to conscience—that never entered the mind of any person who practised them at all.

Again, this is not the only instance in human history

when the same thing has held good. That mighty religion of the East known as Buddhism, which, I think, enrolls or includes about four hundred million adherents, and which in some of its forms has borne a certain resemblance to the Christianity under which you and I were trained, came into existence at first scarcely as a religion, but rather as a philosophy protesting against the depravity of the cruel and vicious cult of the time. The Buddhism that you would see in India to-day, and to war against which you send your missionaries, is not the Buddhism of Gautama, the Light of Asia, who had no idols in his system, and whose one law was the law of love. For, pessimistic though that creed was, it at least saw as far as this, that the way of escape from human ill was by the law of love. But Buddhism and Christianity were wide as the poles apart in this: that the law of love, once victorious, said the Buddhist, is to result in eternal death, which is the only peace humanity can hope for; while the law of love, according to Jesus, will result in eternal life, which is the good that the Christian can hope for. The Buddhism of which I have just spoken came into existence as the protest of morality against religion.

Again, even in the history of Christianity itself, we have something instructive. What was the Reformation of the sixteenth century but the protest of the conscience against the prevailing religion? And to-day, when some of you are inclined to take matters more lightly, and to think that the things for which your fathers fought and died do not matter much, there is a danger lest we lose something which was gained in that great conflict. Conscience entered its protest against

the degrading, immoral, paganising practices of the officials of what purported to be the Christian Church. They rescued Christianity by calling men to the ideal of Christ, to His authority, and to His gospel. That protest of conscience against what seemed to be religion has been made more than once in the history of Christianity since.

II. Morality and religion, if only Christ be received and understood, have the same ideal and the same goal, must ultimately appeal to the same faculties in human nature. For men always recognise the imperative of conscience, even when they refuse to obey it. When men begin to speculate as to whether conscience is to be trusted, whether it is not the accidental outcome of things for which there is no mental justification—the struggle for existence is one, and the social preservation is another—and so on, they are forgetting that the highest achievements of science in the field of history are those that have been made in defiance of the verdicts of society by men who have suffered and died for their protest. There is a still, small voice that speaks within which tells a man that the right is to be followed and the wrong is to be shunned, which condemns a man when he has succumbed to the wrong and refused the right; and to all mankind, said a pagan writer, the voice of conscience is the voice of God. Things may fill us with amazement in this world of perplexities and antitheses, but none of us, I think, will refuse to recognise that morality needs no defence. For man, however imperfect his moral ideal may be, will recognise that if he does not obey the voice of conscience, at any rate he ought to do so, and there is a power within higher than himself, nobler than himself.

which speaks to him without the voice of any preacher, "This ought ye to have done."

It is one glory in the history of religion that the people of Israel, however they may have come by their call, have identified religion and righteousness. Whenever I hear men, and often young men, speaking lightly about the Old Testament as here and there seeming to enjoin imperfect morality, I would like to plead with you to read and think a little more. For, alone amongst the religions of the older world, that of Israel stood out, however imperfectly, as a declaration of the essential unity of the worship of God and the service of right. Righteousness and religion were held to be different aspects of the same thing. In a period and amongst societies where religion had sunk to such degrading depths that human nobleness was ever lifting its voice in protest against it, the religion of Israel stands out, and stands out alone, as the declaration of a divine ideal, which, however imperfectly attained by those who professed the religion of Israel, looked forward to the establishment of a kingdom of God wherein shall dwell righteousness. Some time before the first preaching of the Christian Gospel, this religion of righteousness was in danger of losing its freshness and its power. At the time when Jesus first began, with his Gospel of repentance and of Divine love, to teach the simple fishermen of Galilee, scribes and Pharisees had managed, by their interpretation of the law, which was at once a law of religion and a law of righteousness, to bind heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, and to reduce the simple moral code to a series of minute ritual observances. He was held to fulfil the law who could remember what to do cere-

monially, and he was held to have disregarded the law, however faithfully, kindly, and nobly he might be living, who had forgotten or who never knew what the proper ritual was. Then came Jesus and swept it all away, and, humanly speaking, He died for doing it. His protest was entered in the name of religion against the burdensome ritual and minute, useless observances with which men were troubled in His day. The first and great commandment, said Jesus, is this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength; this is the first and the great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." For the law, as it was called, with its burdensome code, Jesus substituted a divine impulse. "Love is the fulfilling of the law. This ought ye to do: Love thy neighbour as thyself."

III. In the Christian law of love we have the ideal and the goal both of religion and morality. About this I would like to say three things: (1) It is mischievous to think or speak of love to God as competing with our love to men. The love of God to us knows no exceptions, and, if our Master is to be believed, is not forfeited, however sternly He may treat us for our misdeeds. Our Father, whose name and whose nature are love, regards us as His children, even when we have wandered from Him, even when we resist Him; for sin is selfishness and rebellion against God. But that consciousness of sonship is not ours until repentance has brought us back to the feet of the Father, and we realise that love which was stored up even when we were in the wilderness and away from our Father's home. This sweet Gospel of Jesus Christ is confirmed

by the witness of the Spirit; for the first fruits of the Spirit in the heart of the Christian is that very power to love, that consciousness of sonship. "Beloved, now are we sons of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." But this love of God and love from us to God should never be allowed to compete with, or to be thought of in competition with, in antagonism to, the love we are asked to give to one another. In fact, love to God is fulfilled in love to men.

I am in danger here of trenching upon the borders of mere sentimentalism and ideal fancy, and some, especially business men, who know what it is to deal with the stern facts of life, might tell me that as a preacher I am up in the air and away from practical realities when I talk about the operation of the Christian law of love from man to man. No, I am not; and, what is more, you agree with me at every step of the road. You will agree with this—that if you could, by the waving of a magician's wand, to-morrow, make every man do as he would be done by, recognise his neighbour's rights to that which he himself seeks to enjoy in his own degree and in his own sphere, the kingdom of God would have come, there would be little else left to strive for, and the very life that you live now would be fulfilled in the life that you would seek to live, and would have all your dear ones live. If you look in that direction and keep your life attuned to it, you will discover that your attitude towards mankind is that which will bring about the fulfilment of this idea. For the spirit of kindness, that of reverent goodwill as between man and man, lived in the events

and affairs and relationships of every day, will, by and by, so surely as the light follows the darkness, bring in the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God will come, or so it seems to me, by the recognition of that mutual obligation which is the fulfilling of the moral law between man and man. It is not enough for a man to say he keeps straight; that is a great deal; it means you do not wrong your neighbour, and that when your word is passed it is as good as your bond, and so on. But the love of which I have spoken is ever in protest against censoriousness; there is no place for contempt in the character of him who would do as he would be done by. There are many things which you do not do, you business men, in ordinary every-day life, even in the adoption of the right attitude, which would be done if you would only think that love is the fulfilling of the law.

(2) This law of reverent goodwill as between man and man looks upon every soul as of eternal value—looks, in fact, with the eyes of Jesus Christ. I heard of a poor young woman who had a dreadful bereavement. She had lost her husband and her little child, and then, after the death of both, another little one was born, and was also taken. These were her all here, and you can scarcely think of a much greater bereavement than that. It seemed as if everything for which she had lived, to which her nature had given itself, everything which had been her joy in service, was gone. But speaking of it in her patient and sweet way—a way in which, I fear, many of us would not have acted in like circumstances—she said, “I cannot think what the meaning of it is, unless it be that I loved them too much, I ought to have loved God more, and so He took

them away." That is not the God to whom I prayed this morning, nor is it the God of the New Testament, nor is it the Christ in whom Christians believe; for if we are right and Christ reigns He would sooner give the widow's son back than take him away. Your love never competed with the love of God. I do not know why husband and children were taken, but I know that if you knew why you would never ask for them back; and it was not because you loved them more than God. You fulfilled your duty to God when you loved them. No one ever loves anybody too much. The regret we feel when death has come and taken the best or taken the worst is that we had not loved them more. Moreover, though it would be possible to love unwisely or selfishly, and we often see these things, there is a corrective in the stern lesson of death. The Christian law of love, with its reverent goodwill, is a law and is a love which will never spare the loved. If you stand where Christ stands, and see as Christ sees, and love as Christ loves, those who are dearest to you are those for whom you can never be satisfied with anything less than the ideal. Is there any man who would be willing for his boy to become rich at the expense of his honour and self-respect and purity as a man? Would you like to see your lad a degraded, sensual beast, but a millionaire? Would you like to see him hard-hearted, cynical, unfeeling, vicious, selfish to the last degree, but a master of men and a master of millions? No, you would not; and what would stop you? It would be the love which asks for a higher than that. Get to the love which asks for the highest, and then you see as God sees, and you feel as God feels; for the law of which this apostle speaks, this love which is the

fulfilling thereof, demands the highest, and will not be satisfied with less. It is possible, then, that the great wrench or the great tragedy might come some day which would induce you as a father or a mother to do in this way, the way of sternness this time instead of the way of kindness, that kindness might prevail, that love might be victor in the great struggle between good and ill.

(3) This Christian law of love is discriminating in its incidence. I do not want you to feel that you are called upon to love the whole world as you love your own child. If God had meant that He would not have given you a child. Only He Who can see things as they are, and see them everywhere, can number the hairs of the head of every man, and regard every man as an only child. That is the way in which God thinks about you; you are dear to God, as though the rest of us were not here. But you can't do that. That is why God places the solitary in families; that is why He sent that precious friend who has come into your life, never to go out again; you could not expel him if you would. There is a hierarchy in our experience of the operation of the Christian law of love. Who has the first claim upon you? For whom are you trustee? Whose life is covered by yours? God will ask that from you some day, and you must not be afraid to confess you loved as much as you possibly could the nearest first, for the sake of God. God will require from you first the life of him who was placed in your charge. Never try to evade the responsibilities of the home circle, the business house, and wherever you have to deal with men. Conscience will tell you what to do; you will always know who has the first claim upon your service

and regard. Employers, though your circle of employees may be small, do not think you are without responsibility to God. Those men are something more than units to be paid on Saturday night; they are souls over whom you have a certain charge, and you cannot treat them as you would other people who are not connected with you by this bond of master and man. God put them near to you; He gave you the power that you have—a power over these lives which other men have not. You will have to treat them so, or be held responsible to the Almighty, who holdeth in the hollow of His hand the destiny of every man. The Christian law of love is operative here—not to all the world first, but to those who are in your power. God sends you to be a man and a friend and an inspiration, to take the place of Christ, in fact, to those who are weaker than yourself. “Love is the fulfilling of the law” which operates between you two. Where the Christian law of love reigns life is lived victoriously. So it may be for every man and woman. No doubt there are mourners here; mourners, too, besides those whom death has made to mourn. Here, it may be, is one who lives a long way from another, who dwells in the same home, eats at the same table, partakes of the same experiences. You are mourning about what? About the fact that there is no sympathy between you, no touch; that, do what you will, you can get no nearer to one for whom you would lay down your life. You must not give up that struggle. You feel like being conquered. It need not be so. Where the Christian law of love reigns you have come into partnership with God, and this is His work, as well as yours; and though you may never see the fulfilment of it all here,

go on pouring out that life of kindly desire, that reverent goodwill, which brought Christ here to die for you and for me, and is due for His sake from you to the ingrates, the sinful, the hard-hearted, the evil. Give it, not as those who are being conquered, but as those who are winning all along the line. Remember that the truth shall make you free, and the God who is truth is also love.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.—Amen.

CHRIST AND CHARACTER-BUILDING

Love is the fulfilling of the law.—Rom. xiii. 10.

We love Him, because He first loved us.—1 John iv. 19.

“**L**OVE” is an unsatisfactory word in many respects, because it covers so many distinct and even contradictory meanings. In respect to these meanings, the Greek language is richer and clearer than ours. We translate into English by one word, “love,” ideas for which separate words exist in the New Testament. It is for this reason that one prefers, for example, in 1 Cor. xiii., the retention of the word “charity,” rather than the revisers’ equivalent for love. “Love” means so many different things, all of them constant to human experience, that it is requisite, before proceeding with our text, to make clear what we mean by the use of the governing word. I take it that here love means goodwill; it means also benevolence that issues in self-sacrifice; it means many other things; but these, I think, are its primary significance. Let me illustrate what I have been trying to show you about the ambiguity of the word.

When I was driving through London, I saw on the placard of one of the evening papers the announcement—“Another Love Tragedy.” When I bought the paper I found that the tragedy was the murder of a

woman by a man who said he loved her. The motive which gave rise to the tragedy in that case was the very antithesis of the motive which inspired Him who, before the tragedy at Calvary, said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." The one was a selfish destructive passion—they called it love—and the other was the greatest thing in the universe, the last revelation of the heart of God, and it led to the offering of the Master on the Cross of Calvary.

Our second text demands a little closer exegesis before we pass on. St. John has been called the Apostle of Love, and his account of his experience is, "We love Him, because He first loved us." In the Revised Version the word "Him" is eliminated, and the sentence reads, "We love, because He first loved us." On reading the sentence in the older version, you might be tempted to think, and you would not be wrong, that we love Christ, if we love Him at all, out of gratitude; but there is a deeper meaning in the sentence than that. We love, not only "Him," but anybody else, in the high and noble fashion I have already indicated, because Christ is the source and inspiration of all love divine. As the sun is the source of all light and colour, so is Christ the source of every self-sacrificing affection of which His followers have shown themselves capable. We love—love at all—because He first loved us.

I think these two sentences, with their matchless beauty and their depth of meaning, have an immediate and very real significance for our subject, Character-building, as I hope will be plainly evident later on.

Most men are willing to admit the vast, the almost

transcendent importance of character. For example, Professor Romanes, one of the most prominent men of science in the nineteenth century, said in his posthumous work, which four-fifths of you must have read, "It is surprising how in the long run character shows itself to be the greatest factor in human life." From the point of view of philosopher and historian, Mr. Lecky said in his "Map of Life" substantially the same thing. Neither of these men is speaking as a Christian, though probably both of them would not have denied the name. With those two great authorities most of you will agree. Character probably is the greatest factor in the shaping of human destiny. This robs God of nothing; for, if you fail God, it matters little what destiny was mapped out for you.

It would be wrong for us to say that character is a matter of indifference to us, even when it be somebody else's character. Humanity is one, and every character is an asset of the race. When a man says, as you often hear men say of one another, "So-and-So is his own worst enemy, and an enemy to nobody else," he is making a very superficial remark. That man is an enemy to society who is an enemy to himself; that man is wronging friends, home, country, and God. Character is of the first importance. It matters more than Acts of Parliament; and if in this forthcoming Session we could secure that every man in England should act from the same high motive as, say, the Prime Minister, or the Leader of the Opposition, or the best minister of the Gospel, or your own father or mother, the world would be saved straight away, without any more Acts of Parliament at all.

Again, I would have you remember the importance

of clearly understanding our terms. Let us see just what character is. I will illustrate it thus. There is a man here, perhaps, who has brought his little boy with him; that father is, say, forty years old, the little one is four. There is a striking resemblance between them, but there is a difference too. In one, tendencies which have been reproduced in the other, have been worked out into history, and the history is written in his face, if you only knew how to read it, as Emerson said. But you cannot say that the little one has character; he has disposition. Every man starts in life as the steward of a bundle of tendencies, and in living himself out he is earning his character; and we say some men have more character or less character than other people. It means that character is the deposit of conduct; it is disposition realised and directed either for good or for evil; it means that your acquaintance with life, the struggle through which you pass, the conflicts in which you engage, in which your manhood is either beaten out and ennobled, or defeated and degraded, are God's means for the realisation of the man you are to be. We are as—

“Iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom,
To shape and use.”

If you have agreed with me so far, I think we can venture to stand together in saying, one of the first, if not the very first, of duties is the duty of self-formation.

I proceed to my second point. The highest character is the fruit of an ideal which is also a living force.

In the world that you and I know conflicting moral ideals are ever at work. For example, the moral standard of the nursery is not the moral standard of the school; the moral standard of the school is not the moral standard of business life; and there is a standard over all three which is that of the Church. You must have found this out for yourself. When you became a man you smiled at some of the maxims under which you were trained as a child, for you found that father was not quite so good as he wanted you to be. Also, when you were at school, you found that the maxims of the nursery did not hold; you were expected to fight for your footing, and so on. When you entered business life you found almost a new code of morals. Some of them jarred heavily upon you, and you experienced a certain sense of unreality which accounts for some of the abstention from religious worship—that when you come to church on the seventh day the preacher introduces you to another realm and another standard which nobody seems to think of living. And yet every man would admit that there is a moral ideal, whether we realise it or not. We are all looking one way. Any one character is the approximation, however imperfect, to the ideal which is so far above it as sometimes to seem inaccessible.

This ideal has commonly been associated with religion; but, to be perfectly frank, religion and morality are not the same thing. I have heard young men say, "What would it matter if I were to live up to the best of my light, be as good a man as circumstances will let me be; what would it matter whether I have a faith or no?" I will show you. First, you will admit that sometimes religion and morality have been

in deadly conflict, and always when it has been so on the field of history, morality has won. Even to-day I know religious men from whose company I would rather keep free. There is a certain type of sacerdotalism, and a certain type of evangelicalism, both of which produce unlovely character; and oftentimes we find ourselves in the presence of men of the world, as we call them—I hope not opprobriously—who are real good fellows; and we say so, and we want to know what difference religion could make. We put an indifferent religionist and a noble moralist side by side, and we say, “Which of these is the better man? He cannot be wrong whose life is in the right.” The case is stated strongly when we have said all this; but all I want to affirm is that the highest character, the grandest, the noblest, the most august, is that which religion has directly formed. Neither religion nor morality can reach their highest without each other. Commonly in history—and there is a reason for it—religion has been the inspiration of morality, and compelled men to do their best. Matthew Arnold said, “Religion is morality touched by emotion.” I would rather say, Religion is morality touched with a sanction; the goal of each is the same. Their ideal is one—the eternal right; He is the eternal God. Robert Browning makes one of his principal characters say:

“ I have always had one lode-star ; now,
 As I look back, I see that I have halted
 Or hastened as I looked towards that star—
 A need, a trust, a yearning after God.”

In morals we are living backward, and the faster the better; we are moving toward an ideal already mani-

fested in history nineteen hundred years ago. We are climbing to Christ. No matter how fast we climb or how far, we find that the Christ is still above and before. This can't be evolution; it must be revolution. Moreover, we have not progressed an inch since St. Paul wrote the sentence which is our first text. The race may have done, the world, I hope, has; England is better than imperial Rome; but we have produced no better man than St. Paul, and no sweeter man than John; and both of them went as individuals to the source of the highest that humanity has ever seen—Jesus Christ of Nazareth. No man here is so indifferent to religion, or so careless about himself, but who will say, "Jesus is worthy to be the moral ideal of humanity. I do my homage unto Him." Ah, wait! You cannot have half a Christ; you can't take one side of a Saviour without taking the other. You must have the religious if you have the moral; the Jesus whom you affirm to be God is the Jesus who said "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." The Jesus who compels the goodness of which we have spoken was the Jesus who inspired the love that begot it. Moreover, it is this same Christ who has become the conscience of humanity to-day. We could not reckon without Christ in public, social, or individual life. The ideal of the manhood of Christ is the leaven that is leavening society. Moreover, the closer we come to an appreciation of the character of Jesus, the more clearly does His nobleness stand out, as the ideal, not only for imitation, but for adoration. Jesus was strong, strong as the strongest. You have never fought a battle grander or as grand as that which He fought in His loneliness on the eve of His Passion, when the poor

timid disciples, who thought they were so important to Him, "all forsook Him and fled." Everything that you most admire in manhood you will find in that lonely figure. What was the majesty which compelled the would-be murderers to go backwards, tumbling upon one another, rather than be the first to lay hands upon Him? What was the thoughtful nobleness which in the moment of extremity said, "Let these go their way" ; and as the Galileans fled before the rough Roman soldiers and the rabble of Jerusalem, "Whom seek ye," said He, "Jesus of Nazareth?" But they hesitated ere they laid hold of Him. Yet he was defenceless. It was his manhood only that shone round about Him and shamed and awed. Men feared the Master when they were doing dirty things. They brought a poor trembling woman into His presence; and, though He uttered no word of reproach He woke the womanhood again that the brutality and the lust of men had well-nigh extinguished. There was a man, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who has given us vision of God.

Now, what Christ gave to the world at that time was a moral ideal, which, translated into modern English, is this: Character is incomplete except its last and highest manifestation be love. Righteousness is no righteousness which has no room for compassion. There is no goodness shorn of tenderness. A stunted growth without the flower is manhood which has nothing of womanhood in it. The Ethical Society will never save the world. You don't set out to build character by saying, "This virtue, and now that, must be added unto me." No; you change the whole outlook and spirit of your life. Character is a divine impulse

when it approximates to Christ; and if any man has not the spirit of Christ he is none of His.

I want to close with a word of warning and appeal to young men. I have made no attempt to be popular, to amuse or entertain you. I have brought you face to face with the ideal which is eternal. Jesus Christ is the one challenge to the moral consciousness of the world. It is never repudiated, always vindicated. How, tested by the standard of Jesus, looks the young manhood of to-day? I asked a group of friends who know London better than I know it, "What do you think of the character of the young men of London to-day?" One said, "There is a lamentable lack of conscientiousness in the details of everyday life." Another said, "There are two sorts of young men: first, the sort that has no energy, no worthy ambition, no desire to do well, either for himself or for the world; there is another sort, eager, pushing, ambitious, unscrupulous, determined to succeed—don't mind the price." I wish they could have said there was a third, which they would if it were pressed home—a young manhood, as eager, determined, forceful, and strong as either of the others, but with no axe to grind, who live for an ideal which is bigger than their own puny life, and who remember that strength of character which issues in love is the ideal of the Master who can never die.

I have myself observed, concerning the young manhood of England, some things. First, I notice a lamentable intellectual thinness. So many young men do not know enough to get on with, and they cannot think; I mean that once they could have done so, but they shrank from the discipline; they did not seem to

put into play the moral quality which makes a man bigger mentally as well as spiritually. I notice a contemptuous indifference to moral issues, a willingness to let anybody else take trouble, to shift the burden of responsibility on to other shoulders. Thank God this is not all the young manhood of England; but it is part of it—the manhood (save the mark!) which dismisses religion with a sneer, and thinks it is all done with, the manhood which takes life easy when it can, and when it cannot submits to circumstances, or makes another pay for a success which ought never to have been earned so. Lastly, there is a manhood which, without questioning or hesitation, lives the life of the beast. In saying this I speak to you as a man and a brother. Better allude indirectly than directly to such things in the pulpit. It requires a special grace to handle such a theme. The proper place for the sewer is underground. Every young man knows that there is a temptation to live the life of the beast, and some never think of struggling against it at all. There is no humiliation in being tempted. There is no shame in the fierceness of the contest against a passion which you did not create; but the shame is in living below that standard of the manhood which you know is that which you ought to live. Think of the vast army of women in London to-day living a delirious existence in which excitement is called happiness. The end of such things is death. If there were no bad men there could be no bad women. I speak conscientiously when I say that I think on the whole women are better than we are; their spiritual perceptions are quicker; they seem as though they stand naturally nearer to the divine. But when a woman does go wrong, God help

her; for she is usually irreclaimable. Never let it be said of any man here that he forgot that the highest reach of manhood is the protection and not the destruction of the weak. You owe a duty to woman for which you will be held accountable to God.

England needs men to-day as much as she ever needed them in her history. There is a danger that we are falling under the rule of mediocrity in nearly every department of our natural life. Young men, you must change all that. We want strong men, strong with the strength which issues in love; men strong as the Christ was strong, who look to Him, not only as their ideal, but their Master and their God; for the Christ is not dead, and wherever manhood lives the Christ is at work. Listen to the voice with which He spoke to His disciples of old, for that word was eternal, and means much to you and me at this hour:

"Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely, this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

"We love because He first loved us."

XI

OVERCOMING FOR GOD

Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.

—*John xvi. 33.*

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.—Rev. iii. 21.

IT is fitting that these texts should be taken in conjunction, especially as expressive of our Master's teaching upon the great subject we are about to consider. For both texts purport to be the utterance of Jesus; if not His very words, then, at least, the expression of His mind and intent. In the first text we have our Lord's example and the ground of our confidence of spiritual victory; in the second we have a call and a promise to him that overcometh of fellowship with Christ and the attainment of that level of saintly experience which can only be described as sitting with Him in His throne. Overcoming is a real thing; overcoming for God is a great thing; progressive spiritual experience reveals it stage by stage and hour by hour.

I. A Man's Reaction upon Life.—It may be well that we should attempt a little change in statement in the first text. The clause "Be of good cheer," beautiful as it is, and redolent with sacred memories, can be more tersely and even forcibly expressed. One word with a note of exclamation after it would do—"Cour-

age! I have overcome the world." Courage! The true ring is given to that word when you remember that it was spoken by Jesus Christ in the hour and article of His Passion. He was going to Gethsemane when He said "Courage!" to the disciples. But they were going to no Gethsemane, they were but sorrowing that He was taken from them. The extremity of His agony they did not know, and they withheld sympathy from Him in the hour of His greatest need. "Courage!" said the Master, not thinking about Himself, but about these timid fishermen who depended upon Him for everything. "I have overcome the world." "Overcome" is a big word. It means there is something to come over, and getting over it is a thing divine. Even our Master was made perfect through suffering, blessed obstacles, divine agonies; even Christ pleased not Himself. In the supreme moment of His life, the moment of the agony in Gethsemane, and the dereliction of Calvary, His overcoming enabled Him to say, "Courage!" to those who had not the strength and could not share in His experience. There is a massive loneliness about the Christ here. In fact, to speak of it glibly seems out of place; let us rather look into the august countenance of Him who spake as never man spake, and take courage as we think about the battle that He fought in the darkness for us on that awful night when our text was spoken.

"I have overcome the world." What is "the world"? It has several significances in the New Testament. It may mean the sum total of humanity—"God so loved the world"—meaning you and me and all mankind. It may mean, as here, something entirely

opposed to God, and which neither God nor you ought to love, the sum total of the tendencies which seek for their gratification here or not at all; the aggregate of the influences which make for the destruction of the higher life; and God in Christ overcame that world. Still, the battle is going on in every individual human life, and it is to this conflict that we are summoned in the words of our second text. See the different ways in which men face this great fact, which all men must face sooner or later, and do something with. Our reaction upon life means something like this. Life comes to every man with certain influences, tendencies, possibilities, menaces, and we have to do something with it. The world is always near; you cannot refuse to enter into relationship with it; what is your reaction upon this sum total of influences which go to make up life? That is the measure of your worth. There are different ways in which men react upon that which we call life; let me give you some examples of them.

1. There is that which I may describe as a shallow optimism, the talk of the man who leaves to other people the deep thinking and the serious action, who looks upon life carelessly, even selfishly, and yet may be written down as a very good fellow. Take as an example Dickens's Horace Skimpole in "Bleak House." You remember that this amiable gentleman was a favourite in certain circles because he brought a ray of sunshine with him wherever he went, a child-like artlessness, an unreflective *insouciance*. But he left to other people the paying of his bills; and he was able to borrow money with a cunning artlessness which enabled him to get through at somebody else's cost.

He lived on the fat of the land, but his nearest and dearest were miserable. Dickens painted true to life when he drew Horace Skimpole for us with such fidelity. These people abound, the people for whom the sun is always shining, who see very little to grumble at in this paradise of a world; but, so certain as you meet a man like that, you may know that somebody else is carrying double, because of the burden he refuses to bear.

2. In strong contrast with such a philosophy of life, here is a man whose outlook upon the world is a settled melancholy. He seems as if he cannot avoid looking for the darksome, repellent, and horrific. His philosophy of life, if he has one, is a pessimism with few redeeming features. As an example, let me cite to you our British poet, Thomson, the author of "The City of Dreadful Night." His melancholy became a challenge addressed to God—that old, old question, asked sometimes persistently, sometimes intermittently—Why dost Thou permit the world to be so bad and so sad?

"Who is most wretched in this dolorous place?
 I think myself; yet I would rather be
 My miserable self than He
 Who formed such creatures to His own disgrace.
 The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou
 From whom it has its being, God and Lord,
 Creator of all woe and sin, abhorred
 Malignant, and implacable! I vow
 That not for all Thy power, furled and unfurled,
 For all the temples to Thy glory built,
 Would I assume the ignominious guilt
 Of having made such men in such a world."

That mood, in varying degrees, is found among all

classes of men in England to-day. It presents a serious problem, one that has to be faced. For every one of such thinkers and actors counts. He has a certain reaction upon life, by which not only himself is affected, but the world also.

3. Very different from either of the foregoing is the man of the strenuous, practical type, who acts without reflecting much beyond the moment in which he acts; the man who has big, but always practical, ideas; who strives, being content with the moment and the sanction of the moment in which he strives. Take as an example the late Cecil Rhodes. Some of you detest the very sound of his name. (Hear, hear.) Some of you do not. (Hear, hear.) Does not that expression of approval and disapproval in a religious congregation show that that man must have been a strong man to excite both admiration and detestation? You could not take him indifferently; you either had to stand on his side or were fiercely opposed to him, if only in sentiment. The fact is that, whatever his motives may have been, and I do not seek to penetrate them, he was a practical man, and believed in living the strenuous life, and he did it for objects which were beyond his own interest. We may take a living example of a somewhat similar type; I want to mention him with care, and, I hope, without being unduly personal—Mr. Chamberlain.

Whatever you may think about that great statesman, you have to admit that he is no trifler. If the party for which Mr. Chamberlain stands at present is defeated at the next General Election, you may be perfectly certain that he will take that defeat standing. You admire one thing about the man, I am sure, though

you may oppose him fiercely, perhaps, and that is his courage. He takes hold of life with both hands; whatever he sets himself to do he does it with all his might. And yet it would be no unfair criticism of Mr. Chamberlain to say that neither from him nor from Mr. Rhodes have we ever heard any strong and fervent appeal to the higher sanctions and the eternal verities. Both of them may have made it to themselves, but we have not heard it. To us, reading from outside, such lives are of the strenuous, practical type; they react upon the world, but we cannot see that that reaction has any immediate connection with the things that are unseen and eternal.

4. That brings me to another type for which those I have cited have been preparing—that which Lord Rosebery, in his address on Cromwell, called the practical mystic. Some of you may not like the word mystic. Let me define it for the moment, and provisionally. The mystic is a person who sees the Divine in common things. That made Carlyle a mystic, and Ruskin, and Gladstone. You may drop the word, if you like, and say “Saint.” What we want now is a higher type than any I have named. The real want is God’s men to be multiplied—the fighting saints of the world. Amongst these we may mention, as typical of those to whose number I would wish to add every man in this place, such a fighting saint as Whit-tier, a poet and a slave-emancipator, whose philosophy of life is contained in his own words:

“ Better to stem with heart and hand
The roaring tide of life, than lie
Unmindful on its flowery strand
Of God’s occasions, drifting by.

Better with naked nerve to bear
 The needles of this goading air,
 Than in the lap of sensual ease forego
 The Godlike power to do,
 The Godlike aim to know."

We feel that that man is coming very close to the great reality when he speaks thus confidently and hopefully of a mighty conflict to which every son of God is summoned. Rudyard Kipling had just a touch of it when he wrote :

" If there be good in that I wrought
 Thy hand declared it, Master, Thine ;
 Where I have failed to meet Thy thought
 I know through Thee the blame is mine.
 One stone the more swings to her place,
 In that dread temple of Thy worth ;
 It is enough that through Thy grace
 I saw nought common on Thy earth."

From such a sentiment as that we are brought to the New Testament, and we feel a speedy kinship and urgent acquaintance with the great Saviour of mankind. The highest type of the fighting saint, if that word be not inadequate to describe Him who made saints, was Jesus Christ Himself. When we picture the Christ as weak and languishing, as to be pitied because of His sufferings, as bearing His cross heavily, we are looking at Him from the wrong angle. I like to think about my Hero-Master. "Courage!" He said in the moment of the Passion, and when the dark destiny was coming to meet Him. Grand in His loneliness, He had time to think about the feeble folk who cowered under His shoulder. "Let these go their way," He said, as He stood facing the multitude

that with swords and staves came to take an unarmed man. "Courage! You will leave Me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." And if for a moment on the Cross a black cloud seemed to descend to blot out the Eternal, and with it the face of God, and there was wrung from the dying heart that cry of human agony, "My God, My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" it was only that the next instant there might come back to Him that inrush of assurance: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"; and so dying, He lived, and so defeated, conquered. Be of good cheer, therefore, He has overcome, and to such a conflict are we summoned too.

II. Our Victory with Jesus Christ.—Do not for a moment imagine that I seek to identify your destiny with His, and completely. You cannot do what Christ did. Something was wrought out for you and me in Gethsemane and upon Calvary that never needed to be done again; we but fill up the measure that is behind. Nevertheless, He calls us to a magnificent partnership. We all know what is meant by the battle of life. Men who care very little about Christ know what I mean by the phrase, the conflict to live. Whether you will or whether you won't, fight you must. The measure of your worth is, What are you fighting for? You have come from your office, or from behind the counter, to spend a little while with God, to think of higher things, if higher things there be, and you will be back in the rush of it all, and wondering which is the real life—this, in which we speak of a higher to be, a higher that touches the lower at every point, and encloses our life on every side; or this getting of bread

and butter, this adding of shilling to shilling, and pound to pound; this besting your fellows and winning a victory which does not ensure you from the conflict of to-morrow.

Sometimes it would seem as though life had no meaning at all; it is only a chaos, and the best that you can do is not to think about it; and it may be that you have never paused to reflect concerning your reaction upon it all or the reaction of the eternal upon you. But you must do it, for the question is put to you. Do you know what your life means? It may mean, as some people tell us, that this is a school, and God has put us here to learn lessons for eternity, and all that has befallen you is fitting you to be a noble man in days to come. That is true, but it is not all, and it is not half. If all that you and I have been summoned to endure and to do means no more than that we are being made good by it, that could be done without our being sent to school. But that is not it. Man is an end in himself, but he is not the whole. God has something to do in His wonderful universe about which He does not consult us. We are put here to live something for God, and I venture to say that the highest satisfactions you ever had, my worldly friend, were those in which you lost sight of your puny personality, and lived for humanity, lived for your kind. Cannot you come to believe that that is the meaning of the whole thing? You are not to be an end to yourself, although you are an end to God. You may trust your destiny to Him by whom the very hairs of your head are all numbered. And take you care of nothing less than this—to play the man and live for the highest. Leave the rest to God. Sure it is that the most blight-

ing thing in manhood is the influence of fear. Some may feel a dread of what is to be within the next hour, or to-morrow, or the day after; you just shiver in anticipation of an evil that is impending. Put it from you; fear is the last thing which should ever have any place in the heart of a child of God. Shake it from you. Come over. Sometimes we are asked why God permits so much that is evil. "Permits"? Why, He sends it. That old mystic was right who said: "There is no doer but God." Not one of the ills of life could ever touch you if He did not open the door. No matter how malignant your assailant might be, when anything has come to you which your soul pronounces unwelcome, praise God, and then you have come over. The evils, as we call them, of life are often not evils at all. We mix up evil with sin, and talk as if the two were one. They are not; evil is the larger term, and pain may be included in it. You cannot say that your sufferings were good, but they make it; and I would not have pain expelled from life for all the glory that imagination may give. That is what makes man great, and somehow we feel it when we cannot prove it. An American writer, Professor James, in his Gifford Lectures, lately delivered in this country, says:

"It is indeed a remarkable fact that sufferings and hardships do not as a rule abate the love of life; they seem, on the contrary, usually to give to it a keener zest; and the sovereign source of melancholy is repletion. Need and struggle are what excite and inspire. Our hour of triumph is what brings the void."

There is a deep truth there, and I do not wish any Christian in thinking about it to feel the slightest mis-

giving concerning it. You are called to come over, to come up.

I stood on the Cornish coast a while, and on one day of storm I saw something which taught me something. A great sea-bird—I could not give a name to it—rose on white wings athwart the stormy sky, and a little group of us watched for a long time his progress against the fury of the elements. Every now and then it seemed as if Boreas gripped that frail thing and hurled it downwards to the earth. Had it been a man, it would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks fifty times. Then it seemed whirled upside down, but always it turned and rose again, and came up and came over, spreading its wings to the attacking winds; it rose and rose and rose, until it was a speck in the sky. Like the sea-bird, so are the sons of God. On the wings of faith and hope we are meant to rise. Be glad of your conflicts; put on the whole armour of God; fight the good fight of faith; call nothing common or unclean. You have won your victory when you have estimated that they that be with you are more than all they that are against you. Consider that in the common things of life there is something that we have to do for God. Why, it makes the horizon illimitably vaster to think it is not for ourselves, but for God, and He will take care of you. As George Macdonald says in "Robert Falconer": "This is a healthy, a practical, a working faith. First, that a man's business is to do the will of God. Second, that God takes upon Himself the care of that man. Third, and, therefore, that a man ought never to be afraid of anything."

Some of the grandest things that have been done in

this world by heroes of God have been done by those who were feebly endowed, as the world judges, for the task which was before them; but they were done. Not from the seen, but from the unseen, did they draw their strength. It may be that my texts, if not my sermon, shall reach someone who was just about to give up, who felt that the problem of life was too terrible, our experience of life too dread, to enable us hopefully to take heart of grace and try again. Put away from you all self-ward feelings; you are just a soldier on the battlefield, and by-and-bye you shall receive the victor's crown, and sit down upon the throne with the Saviour of mankind. But the test and condition before the winning of the guerdon are: Can you come over? "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." And hour by hour, and moment by moment, in the very midst of the conflict there is rest. You have no business to be miserable. There is peace in the conflict, the peace of the heroes of God. Listen to the voice of our Teacher, in whose words I address you this morning. The Master of mankind speaks: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation," of course, "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. . . . My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

XII

CONSCIENCE IN COMMON LIFE

What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God?

—*Micah vi. 8.*

A GOOD deal of time has been occupied in academic discussions as to the origin of that faculty of human nature which we call conscience. The theories advanced, and which, it goes without saying, often conflict with each other, and none of which, perhaps, is precisely adequate, may be ultimately reduced to two. We have, on the one hand, that familiar view, which may best, perhaps, be expressed in the words of that pagan philosopher who is quoted in Pusey's "Spiritual Letters": "To all mankind conscience is God. The judgment of each will be how he has listened to that voice." Without committing myself to that view, I may state the extremes thus. The naturalistic view of the origin of conscience is that it represents the deposit of social sanctions which have come down to us from bygone ages. In that view conscience is just one of Nature's expedients for the preservation of her handiwork; the whole human race is but one of Nature's instruments—the faculty of conscience implanted within the human soul—ah!—perhaps I had better not say so—within the human mind is one of Nature's expedients to keep the race from

destroying itself and spoiling her work. The explanation of that theory is something of this kind. By the gradual elimination of the unfit, Society has half-unconsciously discovered what is best fitted to survive; Society has an instinct of self-preservation. Consequently she will not tolerate, never has tolerated, anything which would seriously threaten that existence. If any individual has ever exalted his own interests at the expense of Society, he is treated as a monster, and put an end to in some way or another. Such a process as this, continued from age to age, has supplied every individual with certain tendencies of a social kind which have come to be known as conscience. There is no other origin of conscience, say the naturalists, than this. Men have somehow come half-unconsciously to obey that which in any case Society would require. One damning criticism of that view may be stated in a very few words. It is that the very highest achievements of conscience have been made, not in accordance with, but in defiance of, the sanctions of the Society of the time. I call to mind the figure of Latimer tied to the stake in front of Balliol College, Oxford; I hear the mob around him howling execrations, as the mob is apt to do at a great man, suddenly become helpless; and I hear the martyr saying, "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle in England as, by God's grace, I trust shall never be put out," and it never has been. But a man had to die to make that possible, and the achievement to which his conscience prompted him was one that was taken in actual defiance of the social sanctions and the social demands of his hour. I go back a few years, and I see the monk of Wittemberg

standing face to face with the princes of Germany and the representatives of that great Church whose mandate at times made princes tremble; I see him, unaided and alone, claiming a sanction not heard from other lips than his at that moment for his action in defying that great ecclesiastical organisation. If they are right, he is wrong. What business has he to exalt his opinion? Because of something unseen and eternal. A great organised Society pronounces against him, and his response is this: "Here stand I; I can none other, so help me, God." Countless instances might be furnished in support of my statement that the highest achievements of conscience, whatever its origin may have been, have been made, not in alliance with, but in defiance of, the ordinary accepted canons and verdicts of Society. We may say this without very much fear of contradiction, without being academic about the origin of conscience. We know that it is the most unequivocal witness within the individual soul to a higher than self. There is no man without that witness, and there are few men who would not, and at once—in theory at least—pay homage to it. Such phrases as right and conscience, conscience and right, are upon the lips of men who believe in no other world than this. We hear many a man, in denying theologies, in refusing credence to revealed religion, in denying perhaps the existence of God, declare, "He cannot be wrong whose life is in the right." He does not stop to dispute about the fact that there is a right; he simply ranges himself on the side of it, as though it were an eternal somewhat declaring itself within his soul. Though all the world said no, if he be an honest man, and know the right,

he will continue to say yes. "Because right is right, to follow right, were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

But conscience is not to be blindly followed. History teaches us that the most serious menaces of society in the past—perhaps I might almost say in the present—have been the behaviour of conscientious, narrow-minded men. Canon Gore, now Bishop of Worcester, has said, a man's first duty is to educate rather than to obey his conscience—to educate before he does obey. A man should see clearly, know well, before he gives himself in vigorous and enthusiastic self-committal to what his conscience tells him is the ideal life, the good and the true. Yet every man will bear me out in saying you have, if you are a worthy man, and are trying to adjust your life to that which is worthy, to try to obey the monition of the still, small voice, and you must not make yourself captive to any man. Something tells you what to do; you have before you in every circumstance, in every crisis, an ideal of the right, and you are called upon to obey it. You can get no further than to say the Eternal speaks to you in the word OUGHT. You disobey it at your peril. Though we differ in details, and conscience may lead one man that way, and another this, nevertheless that there is such a thing as right you are perfectly sure, and that it is a bigger thing than your particular interest or individual opinion. What more can we say than this, "The light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," has told us; "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Yet we know that every day around us men are either openly defying conscience, or tacitly compromising with it. Good Christian people tell us that it is impossible to do other than compromise now and then the highest that you are able to see. To young men I would especially say, let someone else give you those prudential maxims. Never you be forced to compromise unless it be with your face to the light. I can understand a compromise which means you have come to a wall and you cannot get further; you are looking and straining and waiting for the opportunity to grasp the idea towards which all your energies have been set, but the compromise which means turning your back upon the light which you have seen is a compromise to which I hope no young man will ever give himself. There are ways in which we are daily compromising with what we know is the voice of conscience and the ideal of life. We compromise in business life by the use of false maxims in regard to our practice. Here is one of them: That moral and spiritual relationship between employer and employed is not business. Then what is business? It merely means that you are to make a living and to secure as much as you can of this world's goods; get as much as you can, and keep as much as you can get. These are poor maxims, though they be prudential. To see a young man with them is a sorry sight indeed. I will tell you what business is. Business means that you are daily dealing with spiritual symbols when you come into intercourse with your brother men, when you come into the counting-house, the shop, or the journalist's office. You have done nothing to-day but what has a spiritual significance, has reacted upon your character, has

helped to fashion your destiny, has had influence on somebody else. You have been dealing with spiritual entities, and the resultant of what you have been doing must be measured in spiritual equivalents. Has it never struck you as strange that by God's ordinance you spend eight, ten, twelve, or more hours every day in drudgery—the little time that you can spare for the higher life, perhaps this one hour, and a few minutes before you go to bed? And all the rest means—what? Nothing but clothing your body, pleasing your appetite, getting through and preparing for the end, when even your dearest will bury you as the dead out of their sight?

“ Our hearts like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.”

Is that what you spent ten or twelve hours a day in drudgery for? God does his business badly if it be so. But it is not. This is not the place where we live the higher life. Here we are just talking about it. Outside and in the business we live it. When you deal with a man across the counter, when you are quoting to him concerning stocks and shares, you are doing something that affects human destiny and will go on affecting it when you are no more. It all means, as Robert Louis Stevenson said in “Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” it means intent. There is nothing that matters little. If business men would only think hour by hour of the sanction of their business life, they would not find it so difficult to bring all life into harmony with the spirit of our text: “What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him?”

That means that at once there is a relation of mutual trusteeship between employer and employed. It matters very much to you what that man over whom you have power is doing with the rest of his time, when he has passed from your sight. It matters very much what opportunity you give him of leading the right life and the highest. It matters a great deal what ideal you are setting before him. He is either better or worse because of what he knows of you. This is business, the highest business, for which the counting-house is just the opportunity.

Sometimes employers tell me that it is very difficult to discover a man of character, that they are perfectly willing to pay for character when they can find it, but that the lack of conscientiousness is positively appalling. This, I am compelled to believe, is true. Good servants are a rare entity. A man cannot be trusted, as a rule, behind your back; when you find a man who can, it is worth your while to pay him, so you tell me, as much as you can possibly afford out of your profits. On the other hand, young men sometimes tell us that, no matter what they do for their master, he just regards them as a chattel, as a means to dividends, and nothing more. Thank God, all employers are not like it; but if there are any they are sinning against God. No man is a chattel; no, not even if he be an unworthy servant. You have some responsibility towards him, and only when that responsibility is carried to the point where service for him becomes a menace and an injustice to what you owe to other people are you justified in severing the relationship between you two. A man matters because a man is a soul. Sometimes those who are in your power are treated as if they had

no soul. A young fellow tells me about his cheerless life, his loneliness in the great city, the hardness it engenders, the cynicism which steals over him, because he feels that he just fills a niche for a little time in a business office, and by-and-bye he is liable to be thrust out at the caprice of a man who has power to say "Come" and "Go." Again, we are told that from the employee is required service which no conscientious man ought ever to render. One of the false maxims of our business life is that trade lies are necessary. If society requires trade lies, and is built upon them, so much the worse for society. We are wrong all round, and we are losing all round. If it be true, as I am told, that to gain a footing in a new district you have to bribe your way inch by inch with the subordinates in this institution or that, there is something against which a conscientious man should protest with all his might. I am told the employer will sometimes require from his subordinate that the lie be told without a blush and the purchaser deceived because he is ready to deceive in his turn. It will be a bad day for England when that becomes general—pray God it never may! Only the day before yesterday one young fellow asked me an opinion as to his proper course of action. He said: "I am in the antique trade; it sometimes happens that we have to offer for sale to a collector an article which appears perfectly genuine. If a collector did not ask for it, I would sell it for a small sum and say what it was; but if a collector asks for it I am compelled by my master's commands to ask ten times its value. I must do it, or I must go. Now, what would you tell me to do?" It is all very well for a preacher to sit in his arm-

chair and look noble and spiritual and highly moral, and give an opinion which amounts to a command. But I will confess that I hesitated when I heard what were that young man's responsibilities and his chances of a new situation; but only for a moment. There are no two ways about a thing like that. That is a lie that you are asked to tell, a bad lie, a lie by which you intend to exploit the person who is dealing with you, a lie which he believes to be the truth; a lie which, though your employer be the principal gainer, and upon him rests the principal responsibility, reacts upon you. Come out of that business; let it go. I would say to you, in the simple words which you heard in your childhood and many a time sang in the Sunday-school:

“ Courage, brother, do not stumble,
Though thy path be dark as night ;
There's a star to guide the humble—
Trust in God and do the right.”

Then they tell me that it often happens in trade that the man who has set before him the Christian ideal finds himself in danger of ruin. He cannot compete with the men who don't allow conscience to stand in their way. Not many miles from this spot I know one such instance—a man who tried to act squarely every day, and at the beginning of the day resolved that there should be no lies told, not even by silence; he would offer for a fair price that which would bring him a fair profit. The result, he tells me, is that his business has been gradually going down. If that is so, I pity the man who alone—and he must be alone—makes such a fight. But I would like to tell anybody like him that is here not to think that you are

necessarily going to fail; for in some cases, at least, I have known the precise opposite—a brave man and a good has come out on top. When men knew that his word was as good as his bond, that his Christian character was to be relied upon, and was not lip testimony, they trusted and stood by him. So that there is even here a spiritual dividend for him who will do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God. But if there were not, let it be just the same. Go straight in your relations with men, live as before the face of God, and if He lets you down, ask Him why it is, and our Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly. For all is not yet. You may have to be contented with a little in this world; this world is only a corner of the real one, and, by-and-bye, you will see to the full the meaning of the discipline through which you have been called to pass.

Again, there is a compromise with conscience in our use of our leisure time. Some young fellows have told me that they will have nothing to do with religious people, and they are not going to promise themselves to any religious organisation; for, they say, it is impossible to be other than a hypocrite if you join a religious society and then try to live as the times demand. But, young man, you are a hypocrite already. If you have seen the highest and refused to obey, what are you but a hypocrite? You do not stand in the least higher than the man who has joined a religious society, in the hope that God may enable him to redeem the time. Leisure time, as it is called, is frequently employed for orgies. One serious danger of the hour is that which is so often referred to as to have become commonplace—the craze for excitement in one

form or another—the stage, the football field, and worse. There is nothing wrong, intrinsically, about healthy recreation, but when it has ceased to be the servant and become the master, woe to you. Rudyard Kipling was severely criticised for talking about the “muddled oafs” at the goal. It may have been vigorous language unpoetically expressed, but there is some danger lest the craze even for athleticism—and I stop there—should drive out every higher idea from the minds of its victims. The whole conversation of some young fellows is football, or cricket, or the turf. So soon as excitement of that kind lays grip upon a man’s mind, in some way it seems to act upon his conscience. It is but a step to the gambling-table and the drinking-hell, for these things flourish in the atmosphere I have described.

But, more than that, we have the idle rich around us. Perhaps it does not become us, as members of the middle class, to tell the higher grade what it ought to do, but sometimes one is filled with misgiving when one hears and reads of the condition of English Society to-day. Such a case as that of Lady Granville Gordon—whom God pity!—reveals a condition of rottenness against which every Christian man in every grade of society ought to set his face with intensity. It matters much to us who love our country. I am told there are Society women who live the lives of pigs in their country houses. How many there may be God only knows. But what a life it must be! Surely there is something of responsibility resting upon us for a clear witness against a state of things which threatens ruin to our country, just as it brought ruin to Imperial Rome. We cannot

clear ourselves of such responsibility. We must not ignore these things. Where the privileged and unfettered indulge such bestial instincts as the army of women upon our streets in London, less fortunate, in whom the same practice and the same life, encouraged by some of those whom we meet and talk with day by day—a life made possible because of the atmosphere that these women have been permitted to breathe, and for which we cannot rid ourselves of responsibility—it must bring its natural penalty, and in this world. He who thus trifles with God's opportunities may some day be asked to account for another's fall, besides his own. Here I question myself in company with you. There is a compromise with conscience, which is a luxurious indifference to the state of things I have taken a moment to describe. You may ask yourself what matters it to you that at our gates men are living lives of vice and wickedness and ignorance. It matters much to you, for we are trustees of a higher life which God has given us to see. If we spend our lives, even in a modest way, in comfortable indifference to what our brethren are doing in the great city or in the great Empire to which we belong, we are sinning against God. Our earthly citizenship demands something more, and it must be rendered to our Heavenly Father.

I believe in a patriotism which is not often asserted to-day. "Mafficking" is one thing; to stand by your country, and to believe in those who are of your blood and speech, is another. If God had meant us to be entirely cosmopolitan, he would not have planted the solitary in families. If England has a mission to the world, we are summoned to be loyal to England.

Have mercy upon the fallen, and live so yourself that it will be difficult for them to fall. The Lord requires something from those of us who have time to take care of ourselves. There is a beauty owing to our fellows for the sake of the Lord, who has given us the time in which we live and the opportunities to live as we do. Strive for the highest; it is within reach of everyone. Live for God. The best way to do it is to raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick, and lead the blind. I cannot pretend that I have no responsibility, nor can you. It is practice that matters, not preaching. If a new revival of religion is coming—and I am one of those who hope for it—I believe it will show itself in social redemption; spiritual men will fight the fiercest battle on behalf of the hungry, the poor, and the sad, and for Christ's sake men will brothers be to those less fortunate than themselves, and will try to understand before they condemn. Deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. "For they that be wise shall shine with the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever."

XIII

PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

If a man die, shall he live again?—Job xiv. 14.

Because I live, ye shall live also.—John xiv. 19.

THIS is a question asked in the Old Testament and answered in the New; asked in a good many cases, but nowhere perhaps so plainly as in this chapter and this book. But the question which is left a little uncertain in the Old Testament, or to which an affirmative answer is given with hesitating voice, becomes a triumphant certainty in the New. Christianity came to tell us about the deathless, ageless life, on the authority of Him through whom life and immortality have been brought to light. His words ring in our ears in confirmation of this text, which is our promise and our surety: "Because I live ye shall live also," "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

It is sometimes said that interest in the subject of personal immortality is not what it used to be, that in point of fact the world—by which we mean humanity—is becoming increasingly secular in interest and in outlook. Some of you are doubtless familiar with the words of that great scholar, historian, and thinker, Mr. Lecky. In his "Rise and Progress of Rationalism in

Europe," Mr. Lecky tells us that undoubtedly men are becoming increasingly secular in the focus of their interests. We may learn something from the silences of the pulpit. Ministers and elderly men will both agree with me that whereas once upon a time sermons were always charged with appeals based upon the tremendous issues of conduct, not for time but for eternity, nowadays we have become so practical that appeals are not made from sanctions drawn from considerations of judgment to come, and the blessedness of heaven or the terrors of retribution. Now, mark this. In history it has always been true that when the pulpit has taken to moralising, morality has lost its dynamic. We can learn our morals elsewhere, prudence will teach us the importance of a certain regard to conduct; but the highest achievements of conscience in any century have been made, not in accordance with the dictates of prudential maxims, but in obedience to the tremendous sanctions drawn from the consideration of man's eternal citizenship.

Again, we are told that to-day, intellectually, there is more uncertainty about the fact of personal immortality than there ever was before: and perhaps that is true, though not so true as some of you think. We are less certain in some ways because of a new habit of mind induced by acquaintance with the methods of modern science. Young men, who know nothing at all about science, are under the domination of certain notions, derived from the methods of science, and you regard nothing as proven which has not been the result of conclusions arrived at after laborious observation and experiment. In other words, that is proof to you which has been obtained by the inductive method.

Now, young men, permit me to say that there is another kind of proof than this. I want you to concede this before we approach the heart of the great subject we have in hand. There is another kind of proof than that which is derived from the inductive method. Moreover, nothing can be absolutely proven even by that method. And again, the things which you do daily, the objects to which you give yourself, the aims of which you are most conscious and to which you devote your energies with most enthusiasm are not the result of your inductive proofs, have little to do with observation and experiment, but are rather the fruit of a Divine impulse. The best things in human nature are not the things which you stop to reason about at all, but the things that you feel and know and see to be the highest.

Again, it is said that to-day there is a cessation of desire for personal immortality—perhaps I ought to have said a comparative cessation of desire. I have met people who tell me that they have no wish for a life of personal existence beyond the grave. There are several ways in which they could come to such a feeling and condition as that; one is mental ennui. I think that the sense of the mystery of life is so great, the sense of illusion so appalling, the fruit of the noblest effort so small, that some of the best of men gradually grow tired, and cease to bother about what may come, and just wait for the great dissolution without expectation and without hope. A larger number are represented by such a person as this. I heard a City man speak the other day, and I took a mental note of his case. He spoke to a friend in these terms:

"I know all you would say to me. I went to Sunday-school the same as you did; I used to be a worker in the Church; I had my notions, as you have them now, about man's eternal destiny. I have come to the conclusion that there is no such destiny, and that, if there were, I don't seek it; it matters nothing to me. I have worked hard all my life, and my ideal can be summed up in a few sentences. It is this: To provide a competence for my five children, and then let death come as soon as it pleases. I ask for no waiting on the other side."

Trouble has driven many people to that condition. I know some at the present hour who would be glad to feel that the evening had come, that the night would soon close down, and all their worries and their sorrows be hid in the silence of the grave.

And yet with all this there is such an interest in the subject of personal immortality that I question whether many others can compare with it in significance and importance. Men for the most part do want to live. Even some of those who say that they do not, if they could be assured that the best is true, and not the worst, would very soon change their outlook and their hopes, feelings, and desires.

SO "Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
 No life that breathes with human breath
 Has ever truly longed for death.
 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
 Oh, life, not death, for which we pant,
 More life and fuller that I want."

It is love that speaks with the loudest tongue here. There are some people to whom life has ceased to signify much since the dearest went away. Most of

your interests now are upon the other side; you feel that the cruellest thing that ever came into your experience was Death's invasion of your home, and if you could be assured that you will see your dead again, you would not trouble very much about your personal immortality—you would be glad to think that love can never lose its own.

It is for this reason that men are always asking, and will continue to ask, in the words of Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?" I have no hesitation about the answer. No, he will not; for the simple reason that he will never die. We have the highest authority for saying this. Deathless life is in Jesus Christ. The Master of the universe, who holds the keys of death and hell, is the One who came to save mankind. The destiny of humanity is bound up with the life of Jesus Christ. To Him do you belong, not to yourself; not your own are you, but bought with a price. Jesus Christ has rights over your souls, and it is in Him that all your hope is centred, not only for yourself, but for your dear ones. If Christ were wrong in the authority He claimed and the assurance with which He spoke, it is a dismal fact for humanity to-day; but if He were right, all the best we hope for and expect is bound up in our kinship with Jesus Christ. "Because I live, ye shall live also." I will venture upon a prophecy. It is that the next great rehabilitation of the fundamentals of religion will come, not from the side of theology, but from the side of science. Theology, anyway, is no more than speculation; it always stumbles along in the wake of spiritual experience. Experience comes first and theology afterwards. My belief is that we are at the dawning of a day when the rehabilitation

of the great facts of religion will come from the side of that which has hitherto been hostile to it. Moreover, I think the time is coming when our knowledge will be unified with our experience, and our highest aspiration will find justification in the known facts of our life.

There are certain great names to-day which stand out as exponents of science, and which are associated, at the same time, with a not unfriendly interest in religion. Among these I would like to mention Sir Oliver Lodge, Principal of the University of Birmingham. This great man, ex-President of the British Association, said some time ago that to him the hypothesis of a World Soul intimately and immediately concerned with ours is the best explanation of things as they are. The second volume of a work by the late F. W. H. Myers, which bears the significant title, "Human Personality, and Its Survival after Bodily Death," contains these two passages. The first is:

"On a basis of observed facts, Christianity, the youngest of the great types of religion, does assuredly rest. Assuredly, those facts, so far as tradition has made them known to us, do tend to prove the super-human character of its Founder and His triumph over death, and thus the existence and influence of a spiritual world where man's true citizenship lies."

The second passage is this:

"I venture now on a bold saying, for I predict that, in consequence of the new evidence, all reasonable men a century hence will believe the resurrection of Christ; whereas, in default of the new evidence, no reasonable man a century hence would have believed it."

The second part of that statement is too strong; the former part I entirely and implicitly believe.

Again, from this side of Christian experience and this new friendly interest of science in human nature from the religious standpoint, we have derived certain great ideas. The first is that the world itself is spiritual. What do I mean by that? I do not want to use a vague term and leave it. It may be neither matter nor mind, but it is something greater than either, and which has immediate significance for the highest of which human nature has shown itself to be capable. If we could get at the meaning of the universe, the ultimate meaning, we should find that it has an immediate bearing upon morality, our relations to one another, and to the Soul of all things. Now, if all is spirit, in that regard, if all is soul, Sir Oliver Lodge, whose soul is it that bears such an immediate moral relationship—a relationship which we cannot repudiate and with which we cannot dispense—whose is it? The answer of Christian experience comes to our aid, and says, Jesus Christ is Lord of all, the World-Soul, comes the affirmation from a quarter in which we never heard it before, is the same as He who spoke on the hillsides of Galilee and in the upper room at Jerusalem. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

The second great idea is this—that personality is the ultimate reality in the whole scheme of things. You were prior to the universe; you are a universe yourself. Every soul has infinite value—here Jesus speaks again—yours is worthy of an eternal destiny for that reason alone. I could quote Dr. Parker in saying, "Man is a soul, and he has a body." The body is but the language of the soul. "Words, like

nature, half reveal and half conceal the soul within." Moreover, life is lived in limitation. Here I will utter a sentence I will not attempt to prove or expound, which has little to do with my immediate subject. I say it and leave it. Some men are better than their bodies will let them be. Moreover, life has value in relation. You cannot live alone the best life or the highest. It is love which gives significance to the living. Take that to the very highest plane that humanity has ever known. Love of God has produced a somewhat in human character compared with which all else is dim and sordid and ugly. The witness of saintship in the world is this—that life, to be life at all, should be lived with God. It is not eating and drinking and sleeping; it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. This is life eternal, that we might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

From this point we can get farther and eagerly so. The authority of Jesus comes to our aid. He has not left us without definite witness. Observe how little the Christ ever said about the life to come, and yet how every word He spoke had immediate relation to it. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Suffer me to change that word, time-honoured as it is. A mansion means a big thing now; it did not mean that when King James's translators first put it down here. A mansion is a remain-sion, a place to remain in. "In My Father's home are many resting-places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." The sweet authority of Christ comes to our aid in the spiritual witness of believers. There is one type of man who never doubts personal immor-

talities, and he is the saint. The nearer to God the surer of heaven.

You remember the story of the old Scottish woman, who was asked by her minister to test her—so great was her love for the Master, so sure was she of His goodness—"But, Jenny, woman, suppose at the last, after all, your Lord should let you down to hell?" "Ah, weel," she said, "be it as it pleases Him: He will lose mair than me." Goodness has a claim upon God. Goodness is an apologetic for immortality. Produce a saint, and you produce something far more worthy to live than this world of bricks and mortar, stones and lime, sea and air. Nay, you have produced a faith that it cannot be otherwise, and that it shall live. To have lived with God is the promise that you will live for aye. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Life, on the authority of Jesus, is one; death is an episode, an event in continuous life. Jesus, the Soul of the universe, has charge of yours. When Death comes, he is but a messenger to call personality to its own. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He"—or it—"shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Moreover, the persistence of personality means the persistence of all the relations that make life glad and good—the persistence of memory, thought, feeling, desire, affection. Morality is pivoted upon personality. Make a noble man, and you take with him to the eternal world the relations that have helped to make him noble. Can the dead, then, forget? No; they wait for the great reunion; "they without us shall not be made perfect." "Shall we see our dead again?" say

some. Yes, you will; they are safe in the arms of Jesus; in the unseen you will meet them all. And I sometimes long to think the black sheep will be there with the rest. Moreover, I feel that the cruellest stroke of fate which has ever come to any man in this life, in the removal of one who taught him to be noble, might be God's call to a higher citizenship here in preparation for the citizenship beyond. There may be some man or woman here who feels bitter because death has robbed him or her of all that gave meaning to life. Do not feel like that any more; set your affections on things above. If you only knew, you would make Christ your Trustee, and never question Him again. You little know what your dead have been saved from and saved to. Your little child who has gone to heaven is wiser than you, and he will be your teacher by-and-bye. I wonder what the minister of this church, so lately called home, thinks this morning of the thoughts he used to think and the things he used to say about his great agony when it came, and the promise of his partner to wait for him at heaven's gate. He has not forgotten us, and if his voice could sound from the tomb, I know what he would tell us—that Jesus, the Conqueror and King, is the pledge and the guarantee of all spiritual reunions above. Oh, it is worth our while to trust Him, to leave all to Him, to live as in His presence, to make Him the sacrament that puts us in touch with eternity. He is the golden bridge over the gulf of death.

“ Think, when our one soul understands,
 The great Word which makes all things new,
 When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
 How will the change strike me and you
 In the house not made with hands?

“ Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart;
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the Divine.”

Some time ago I read a little book on this subject, advocating a different view from that which I have placed before you. One beautiful instance was given in it of a truth that all our hearts will affirm. A little girl had been accustomed always to bid her father good-night in the same words. She was an only child, and loved as only children are. She used to say, “ Good-night, I shall see you again in the morning.” The time came when death’s bright angel—bright to those who go, dark to those who stay—summoned her to heaven. In her last moments, she called her father to her side, and putting up her little arms, she clasped them around his neck, whispering with her rapidly dying strength, “ Good-night, dear father, I shall see you again in the morning.” She was right, as the child always is right about the highest things. “ Sorrow endureth for a night; joy cometh in the morning.”

XIV

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE LOVE *

The Father Himself loveth you.—John xvi. 22.

THE doctrine of Divine love, we are sometimes assured, has been preached *ad nauseam* by preachers in every evangelical pulpit—in fact, I should suppose in most Christian pulpits in this land. We are sometimes told that the doctrine has been overdone. Perhaps it has. If it has been preached unconvincingly, no doubt that is the fault of the prophets who have had it in trust, and that occasionally preachers themselves transcend or overleap their own experience in their declaration of a doctrine which, if it be true, ought to have a greater effect upon their lives, upon the power of their ministry, upon the quality of Christian character. All this may be true, and yet the doctrine of Divine love is of the very essence of Christianity; it is that which explicitly or implicitly should underlie every utterance made in the name of Christ. Most fittingly, therefore, do we on His authority go back to it this morning. It may be that we can frankly confess to each other that the Apostle of Love, from whose writings we have taken our text, may not always have retained the *ipsissima verba* of the Master when he has been writing about Him. In this fourth gospel I believe myself there are places in which

* Preached in Union Chapel, Brighton, Sunday morning, March 8, 1903.

the Apostle has expanded, perhaps even edited, the words of the Master. In so doing he has not made them false, and it matters very little in the cases where this has happened that we may not have exactly the sentence, word for word, which came from the lips of Jesus. Nay, in some places it is difficult to know whether St. John means that he himself is speaking or his Master; he does not tell us where the one leaves off and the other begins. But I never can bring myself to believe that this is true of the last few chapters, and especially from the thirteenth to the eighteenth in this beautiful gospel. Most of us could repeat the fourteenth of St. John without any book at all. It is the classic of Christian experience, and another like unto it is the sixteenth chapter, whence our text is taken. It matters not how John came to remember these words which in a time of great spiritual strain and intensity were given to him to repeat to us. But this is certain: the spiritual man declares—cannot but declare—that these are the words of the Master, the words of eternal life. It is on the authority of the Master, then, with His very sentence ringing in our ears, that we turn this morning to that fundamental of the Christian faith—God is love.

It is fitting to remember, I say, on the authority of the Master, that this is so, for without the Master we could not affirm it at all. Sometimes we are told that without Christ it were still possible for the human heart to affirm that love reigns at the heart of things. I know not how that discovery is made. The Christ is the source of all that we bring to experience when we affirm that love is the name and the nature of God. We cannot read it in the external world. Henry

Drummond thinks we can; but I believe that Henry Drummond does what the spiritual man always does when he looks for the kindness of God in the world without—he brings something to nature before he reads out of nature the goodness of the All-Father.

“That type of perfect in his mind
In nature can he nowhere find;
He sows himself on every wind.”

It is only when, as Dr. Dallinger, the great Wesleyan divine and man of science, says, we acknowledge that no man has seen nor can see God, not even His footsteps in nature as the God of love, and recognise that the only begotten Son hath declared Him, that we continue:

“He seems to hear a heavenly friend,
And through thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.”

Do not, I pray you, mistake my meaning. It were a sad thing for us if, by a kind of illogical dichotomy, we could believe in a God of love in direct contrast to the witness of nature. No, the truth is that the key to the interpretation of nature is to be found in the Gospel. You can call nature the garment of God, woven without seams throughout, when you realise that the highest is the interpretation of the whole, and that in Christ we have the great secret of the cosmos—God is love.

On the field of history we are not much better off. It is a saddening study to the man who goes into it without faith; yea, verily, it is little more than the records of the crimes and the faults of poor, errant human nature, as has often been pointed out. We need a co-ordinating principle somewhere, and I believe that no man has ever yet accomplished in the field

of history aught worthy of the name who has not found, consciously or sub-consciously, that co-ordinating principle in a rule of right which somehow makes itself felt, and works itself out, and which is only another name for God. Can there be a right which does not issue in love? Our moral consciousness denies it. The God of right and the God of love must be one and the same, and to preach the right without the love, or the love without the right, is to shear your Gospel of all convincingness and power. Sometimes we preach a God whose nature, though we do not say so, is that of a doting amiability; and sometimes we are inclined to preach a God, though we do not say so, who is a God of rigid implacability. Neither is true; both contain a truth. The God of righteousness who is declared in history—and you cannot mistake Him—must also be the God of love, if we are to believe in a future for man—a glorious destiny for those who remain in the image of God. On the field of history we can read a plan Divine best of all when we look through the eyes of Jesus Christ. In our every-day experience, what else can we say? Can we take any other Guide and Master than Jesus Christ? I trow not. If I were a man of the world, pure and simple—and sometimes I think I am not much else—I mean that I would rather look out with the eyes of the man who has to fight the battle of life than I would play the ecclesiastic. If I were a man of the world, pure and simple, I would do what so many thousands of their company even external to the Churches are doing to-day, and without relation to preachers—I would examine the claims of Jesus Christ, and see if there were no hope and guidance for me there.

Mr. Moody once said, in his preaching, and in my hearing, that when he first began his wonderful work, not in England, but in America, he was inclined to make some distinction between the nature of the Father and the nature of the Son. I mean their moral nature—put metaphysics away. He had never formulated it to himself; we do not always formulate our creeds. But after feeling the sternness of the Father, as over against and contrasted with the winsomeness of the Son, he said it came to him like a new gospel that the Son reveals the heart of the universe, and that kindness is the solution of the mystery there. “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” is a moral proposition rather than an intellectual. It should become part of the immediate spiritual experience of every man. When you have seen the heart of Jesus you have no more to learn about the heart of God: it will be the same as His to all eternity. On the witness of the Master, whose life—yea, even rather his teaching—is the declaration of this evangel, we would say:

“God is love: His mercy brightens
All the path by which we rove.”

If we can establish that declaration—and it is not the easiest thing in the world to do it—we can build an experience of optimism upon it, and say, with Sabatier: “When wearied by the world of pleasure or of toil I long to find my soul again and live a deeper life, I can accept no other God and Master than Jesus Christ, because in Him alone optimism is without frivolity and seriousness without despair.” The doctrine of Divine love is one declared to spiritual experience. I sometimes wonder when, with our modern

methods, we shall take the spiritual man seriously, and examine him, and endeavour to understand the reason for his life. We go with hammer and chisel and microscope to examine rocks and fossils; why not ask ourselves the question which, in point of fact, some are beginning to ask, Why is a man good, and loving, and confident that goodness and love are making him? Why is it? The experience of the spiritual man is the best apologetic for the Gospel—far more so than the words of preachers, be they never so eloquent; and the doctrine of Divine love, though it seem to be in plain contrast with the facts of life, is witnessed, without faltering and without fail, in the experience of the spiritual man. He tells us that the love of God is no thing of weak amiability: it is a very stern thing, that it is discriminating in its incidence, that it will not spare its object, that it is the explanation of sorrow and struggle and pain, and that it is the end toward which these things point, and the triumph in which finally these things shall be destroyed. God hath not left Himself without a witness; and the spiritual man, living the life of the Cross, never flinches from the declaration that, in spite of the seeming, “Behind a frowning Providence,” there is a smiling face.

Long ago I remember a lady in this church telling me of her experience of one, a woman, very poor, even ignorant, who had had a hard, strenuous life, and who finally was dying without the hope of doing anything for her children, who made a somewhat remarkable declaration on her deathbed to her visitor. The visitor was trying to convince her, as I am trying to convince you, of the testimony of the spiritual man, that God is love. The poor woman answered by saying, “I can

believe all you declare about Jesus Christ, but I don't believe in God." You would scarcely think it possible that the declaration could have been made, but, you see, it was made by one who was not accustomed to think. She continued: "If Christ were here, the real Christ of whom you speak, I could tell Him all my troubles; but I cannot tell them to God." The demand of that rudimentary experience surely was for a gospel in which Christ should be the pledge and guarantee of the goodwill of God. There are many thousands who feel something like it who may not, cannot, explain why. Christ becomes their gateway into God: and it is not too much to say that there are more men and women believing in the goodness of God to-day—yea, in the very existence of God—because there is a Christ to preach, than through all other means put together. The experience of the spiritual man will bear the test of examination here. There may be one man here in utter despair about his life: he has lived so badly. There in another man close by him who would affirm that, though the whole world go crashing into ruin, still it is well, for "He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm"—He by whom the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Man is a citizen of eternity, and the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind.

"Thou judgest us: Thy purity
Doth all our lusts condemn;
The love that draws us nearer Thee
Is hot with wrath to them."

Some of you, in speaking about the love of God, forget that the love of God means the wrath of God. They

never can be separated in spiritual experience. We have read of the soldier-father who destroyed his boy at the front rather than permit him to play the coward's part and disgrace an ancient name, and I have heard a humbler father say, in anguish of spirit, "Would that God had taken my boy years and years ago than let me live to see the man he has become!"

Love has an ultimatum. There is a point where love is your enemy, and will destroy you rather than fail of its object: it can be satisfied with nothing less than the highest. For love is noble, and God is nobleness, because God is love. On the other hand, love will never spare the loved, because it is calling to higher heights day by day. Your increase of knowledge of the workings of God, of His ways with men, must lead you to know that you will not be placed always in the green pastures and led beside the still waters. God has something grander than this for the children of men: We have read of that ever-great commander who, when asking for someone to lead a forlorn hope, received with gladness the offer of his boy to do it. The old warrior's eyes lighted with love, and with pride he looked at him; he handed him the standard, and said, "There is your task, yonder the enemy; go forward." Was it love that spake, or was it indifference? Was it the love that would have placed its arms around him and shielded him from all harm and from all danger, love that would have cherished the feminine—which sometimes, after all, is the strongest—at the expense of the grandest in that boyish nature? No; in that warrior I read my God, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and as He is so are we in this world.

Again, I would have you believe and know, when you speak of the love of God as the interpretation of things as they are, that it is so discriminating in its incidence that it will not deal with any two men alike. I sometimes wonder why this man has so much to bear and that man goes scot free. If the love of God were not discriminating you would both have cause to mourn. Sometimes we preachers deal with a glorious truth so unconvincingly that we begin to feel that it does not matter whether we preach the love of God or not, we are all alike sunned in the atmosphere of the Divine indifferentism. He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, but He knows which are evil and which are good. It is not as when the sun sometimes shineth in your window, and the birds sing in the garden, when you have death in the home; the glory without seems a mockery as you think of the sorrow within. No; there is something greater than indifferentism here. That man is chosen to be trained and sent at the bidding of love—love that knows itself as love, love that is felt as love; and yonder man is sent, like the warrior in the darkness, against principalities and powers—sent to do and to bear for the sake of the highest. What shall his reward be in the great day of revelation?

I will go farther, and say I do not think the warrior always knows who has sent him to the fight. Sometimes when I see a poor man afflicted in his body, without opportunity, social influence, or consideration, and suffering every moment of his life, passing me on the streets, I ask myself the question, What is that man bearing for me? Vicarious suffering is Divine service. We read that at the Cross. It may be some mitigation

of the terribleness of the problem of human agony when you think that some of the unconscious sufferers of the world—I mean those who do not realise that the suffering is Divinely given—are serving against the great day when the secrets of all hearts, the explanation of all destinies, shall become known.

“ Yea, sometimes when I feel my heart
Most weak and life most burdensome,
I lift mine eyes up to the hills
From whence my help shall come ;
Yea, sometimes still I lift my heart
To th’ archangelic trumpet-burst,
When all deep secrets shall be shown,
And many last be first.”

If we only believed this, and realised the sublimity of the doctrine which has sometimes been held to be so weak, that God is love, it would waken all the manhood in you, and call out the best; you would never shrink from the hardest, no matter what it involved, and your faith would never fail. Did you ever think of the heroism of the Christ? I love to dwell upon it. There was a Hero crucified, and He is my God. Shall we stand in that fellowship in the shadow of Calvary, or shall we fail Him? See what it has made. Even saving faith is the gift of God, the gift of His love, and to be prayed for; but when it comes it makes heroes—Christ’s men, with the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Renan, that great scholar, and critic, and man, who spoke for an age and a people rich in admiration of the Christ, and stopped just short of the truth that I have now declared, this is what he says of the great Apostle

of the Gentiles in his book on St. Paul: "Convinced that he had given his life for a dream, Paul may have wandered, despairing and resigned, on some Iberian shore, aware of the nothingness of life, aware that he was wrong about the Christ, and that the future was dark." Hear what Paul says about himself; it was not just that: "Nothing in heaven or earth shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." That is the testimony of a man who died for the faith, and who died many times before the sword of Nero fell. If we only believed it, Dr. Martineau has said, it would be a comfort rather than a dread to think that the issues of our life are hid in God, that there is only a very little we can do in the fashioning of our own destiny. Should we not simply wait, wait in peace and fortitude, the Divine command? Back to the old authority, our Hero-God: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings, and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me."

PRAYING IN CHRIST JESUS

If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.—John xv. 7.

THE subject of prayer is one of never-failing interest to mankind, and one upon which controversy shows no signs of coming to an end. We might have thought that all that can be said upon this great theme has been said long ago, and that there was no more either to say or to argue concerning it. Such is very far from being the case. I am perfectly sure that in a congregation so comprehensive as this one, for example, we have the most various types of mind and attitudes, too, upon the subject of prayer. I have brought with me into the pulpit a book in which certain of these types are set forth for a purpose rather different from mine, and I venture to suppose that every type herein suggested is present in this church. I intend to speak about these. The first of these is illustrated in the work before me, which I may remark, parenthetically, is a work on psychology, not on religion. The books that are most valuable to me, from a religious point of view, are nearly always those which treat religious questions from some other standpoint than the religious one. The eminent psychologist who has collected the particulars before me put questions to a number of individuals at random. Here are

some of the questions he put to one man and the answers he got:

Q.—What does religion mean to you?

A.—It means nothing, and it seems, so far as I can observe, useless to others. I am sixty-seven years of age, and have resided in the same place sixty years, and have been in business for forty-five; consequently I have some little experience of life and men, and some of women, too; and I find that the most religious and pious people are, as a rule, those most lacking in uprightness and morality. The men who do not go to church, or have any religious convictions, are the best. Praying, singing of hymns, and sermonising are pernicious—they teach us to rely on some supernatural power, when we ought to rely on ourselves. I totally disbelieve in a God. . . . If I were to die now, being in a healthy condition for my age, both mentally and physically, I would just as lief—yes, rather—die with a hearty enjoyment of music, sport, or any other rational pastime. As the timepiece stops, we die, and that is all about it.

Q.—What is your notion of sin?

A.—It seems to me that sin is a condition, a disease, incidental to man's development not being yet advanced enough. Morbidity over it increases the disease, and, at any rate, it is no use praying about it.

The writer of the book drily remarks at the close of the interrogation, "If we are in search of a broken and contrite heart, clearly we need not look to this brother."

Now compare that statement of experience with this one. In answer to similar questions, another man,

forty-nine years of age, chosen at random, like the other, answers:

"God is more real to me than any thought or thing or person. I feel His presence positively. The more I live in closer harmony with His laws as written in body and mind, the nearer do I feel Him to be. I talk to Him as to a companion in prayer and praise, and our communion is joy."

Another, this time a young man of twenty-seven, replies:

"God is quite real to me. I speak to Him, and He answers me. Something over a year ago, I was for some weeks in the direst perplexity. I turned to God's Holy Word, and the promise, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' seems to come afresh from God's heart to mine. Every time my thoughts turned to my trouble, I heard that ring, and I knew that heaven spoke to me. God is the nearest of all realities to my soul. He surrounds me like an atmosphere. He is precious, He is necessary, more to me than my own life."

Now, I suppose we could parallel those two cases in this audience. I am perfectly sure that a number of you have come in here, not because you believe in religion or the Bible, still less in any preacher, but somebody said to you, "We have an hour to spare, shall we go along to the City Temple and see what these people are doing, and what the fellow who is there has to say?" But you have no more touch with us and no more spiritual susceptibility, or you think not, than the organ behind or the walls around me. You can get on perfectly well without any religion. You never pray, and tell me you never want to, and you would feel it rather unmanly not to fight your own

battles, and you think what puling weaklings these people are who go whining to a Higher Power when they want things done for them, and so on. Now, my friend, over against your case I place in respectful contrast the experience suggested in the words just read as coming from the religious mind. Not all of the people who pray are weaker men than you; some of them are tremendously strong, and, to say the least of it, you had better judge of Christianity in particular and of religion in general by the best and the strongest it produces rather than by the weak. If you do, you will find some things between you and me that ought to make you pause and think whether you have got hold of the right philosophy of life.

Partly between these two strong contrastive types of mind there is another great body of experience represented, for anything I know to the contrary, by a majority, a distinct numerical majority, of those who are present this morning. A man of this third type sometimes prays and sometimes does not; occasionally he feels an impulse to cry to his Maker. Perhaps an overmastering sorrow drives him to his knees, but, for the most part, prayer has very little to do with his ordinary everyday experience; yet he would be glad to know that there was any reality in prayer. You will perhaps tell me that you have prayed many a time, and you are not conscious that you have got any answer; but if there be such a thing as answered prayer you would like to know of it, that you may get fast hold upon the things that are unseen and eternal. I cannot do better than ask you to come with me as close up as ever you can get to the words of my text; for if ever there was an unequivocal statement

of the experience of prayer and a promise of answer to it, it is in that text, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Those words must answer to somebody's experience, for we have the temerity to read them in the pulpit nearly nineteen hundred years after they were written. "Ah," somebody will say, "you beg the question, they were not written so far back; you stick St. John's name on, but did John ever write them, and did Jesus ever say them?" I think John did write them, and that Jesus did say them, and the reason why I think so is that they have stood the test of so many centuries, whether it be sixteen or nineteen. They are here, and they have value. Men heed them, pray because of them, cling to them, rest upon them. They regard them as a gracious promise, they build them into heart and life, and your preacher of this morning, not to speak of scores of other people who would say the same thing, believes them to be deathlessly true. The Master who spoke them is speaking them still, and He speaks them in the midst of our congregation to-day. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you"—no stranger voice this—"ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Let us further examine into the scope of this stupendous promise.

"If ye abide in Me." "Now," says my friend the sceptic, willing or unwilling, "I may try this exercise of yours, but to me praying is just like talking at the air; the words go, but they do not bring anything back. I may act on the eternal, but there is no reaction. It is like uttering oneself to an atmosphere." Take your phrase—"an atmosphere." You have

prayed to-day to an atmosphere, and you got an answer. All your human relations are questions of atmosphere. You never yet had anything to do with a person but you were dealing with an atmosphere, one that you could feel and describe, and has value. You know it because it reacts on your experience. Every man has his atmosphere, and when you were trying to sell a man a dozen yards of calico across the counter, and asked him a certain price for it, and did your best to get him to pay it, you were praying; it may have been on a low level, but you were praying to a living person, whose atmosphere was round about you, distinct from any atmosphere you ever knew before, and that man's value for you at this moment, whatever it may be, was an exact equivalent to your prayer. Do you think this is a far-fetched illustration? It is not; nothing of the sort. All religion is a question of personal atmosphere. We live with a living Being. Christianity is no code of rules or system of philosophy; it is a spirit, a life, an atmosphere, and we are dealing with a Person who is, at any rate, not less than any person you ever met in this life. Now if I declare the Person with whom I am dealing across my spiritual counter to be Jesus Christ, you cannot contradict me, if experience goes to confirm my faith. Has He kept His word? Has He done aught for me? My prayer has come back laden with something worth the having, and I send it forth again in faith that the return will increase. "If a man abide in Me and I abide in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

I have a rather curious case of conversion to tell you about this morning which I only got to hear of myself ten days ago. It, I think, makes the point rather

clearer than I can make it by simply talking round it. A young man tells me that his experience of Christ began in this wise: He had been what we call a wastrel, though he was of good family, had a public-school education, and, I believe, a commission in the British Army—that school for saints. He went wrong somehow, and, as young men will—it is a great mystery—though he knew he was breaking his mother's heart—he was not particular about his father. He went on and went down. He left the army, went to America, took part in the Cuban War, got wounded. His people at home knew nothing about it; he went off by himself, sank lower and lower, until in a public-house brawl somewhere he was seriously hurt, and had to lie up for a while. Then he took a situation as gardener, in order to think over the course that he had been adopting up to then, and have time to do it. He said one day, "It seemed to me, while I was at my daily task in the garden, as though the Spirit of all things spoke to me, remonstrated with me, humbled me, called me, and I found myself saying in reply, 'If You will help me, I will.'" So slender was his theology that he did not know who Jesus Christ was, though he had thumbed the prayer-book every time he had gone to church in his boyhood, and repeated with the rest. "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." He had a very hazy idea of the identity of the Master. He just prayed through Jesus Christ our Lord. His first act was to purchase a Bible; he read these Gospels, and particularly these valedictory chapters and utterances in St. John's Gospel, and then he said, "I found out who Jesus Christ was; I made no theory about it, but I said to myself, His was the voice that I heard in

the garden." You may live for a hundred years as a Christian man, but you will never get any nearer to reality than that. I might have said to him, by the Holy Spirit, it was true, Christ spoke to you in the garden. But he would not have known exactly what I meant. It was quite enough for him to say that Christ spoke—this was the voice that I heard in the garden—tremendous, intimate, personal, near. The Christ spoke and claimed him, and he serves Him to-day as a faithful, humble follower, working in the Anglican Church, his experience all his own. For Christ never comes to any two men in precisely the same way. Every man has his own value with the living Lord. Suppose you were to ask that man whether he thinks he is heard by the Lord of life and death he prays to. He would make answer, "Yes, for I stand in the atmosphere of the Christ; His spirit is my teacher. I would rather not pray against His will; but, when praying, I am rising and learning how to pray. His words abide in me. I ask what God wills and it is done." I am trying to be as simple and plain as I can, and emphatic in the statement of truth. I don't want to say, "If" and "but"—you shall be heard now, but you shall not be heard then; you may pray about that, but you must leave this out. You may pray about anything that matters to your experience, but if you pray in the Spirit of Christ you will soon find that some of your old petitions are left behind. Prayer wins a man away from selfishness. Praying, said the present Bishop of Oxford, will either make a man leave off sinning, or sinning must make him leave off praying. If you come to me with curious questions about whether you can pray about

the removal of the street-pump, or something of that sort, my answer is, Abide in Christ, and you won't be thinking about the removal of the street-pump; you will be thinking upwards, and to be thinking upwards is to be growing nobler as you pray. "Abide in me and I in you"—fusion with Christ, to be looking at His dear face while we pray, to so escape from all things sordid, selfish, mean, base, that we rise into another atmosphere and to another life, and the impulse to pray to the Master leads to our placing ourselves upon the altar of service for Him, and you learn by-and-bye that to pray in His Spirit is to enter into that perfect freedom of the sons of God, without which eternal life is not yours. Let me give you another picture. When I spoke just now about personal atmosphere I could see the puzzled look on the faces of some of my hearers. Do you not feel that every person has his individual value for you, and that you know that person's presence, apart from speech, to have made a certain influence upon you? One man comes to you with words of honeyed greeting, but you don't trust him, for behind the words there is something that he did not say which is eloquent to your spirit—his personality, you call it; his aura, his atmosphere, is making its impression all the time. You can close yourself up against it, you can keep him off, sometimes with difficulty; nevertheless, you can and you do.

It is possible to shut off the higher, as well as the lower, to keep a good man at bay as well as a bad man, and in the differing values of the people who come to us we are either better or worse, according as we receive them. One man will come to me downstairs,

I know as well as can be, and he will tire me while he talks, not because he is saying stupid things—I shall be saying them myself—but he exhausts me somehow—not by his speech, but by himself. Another man will come and talk to me and vitalise me; I feel the better for having shaken that man's hand. Another man will come who calls forth the best in me; perhaps I feel that, though there were no speech between us, we are brothers; spirit makes answer unto spirit. Every man throws his atmosphere round about those with whom he has to deal, and you can abide in the atmosphere of a man until you are better, if he is better than you, or worse, if he is worse. You can open yourself to the influence of a man so that your own personality is dwarfed and injured, or expanded and glorified. Lift all these things to the plane where they should be, and think of the Person behind all, all personality, the Lord of all life, and He who holds the keys of death and hell. An atmosphere it is, but a Person in the middle of it, through whom and to whom I pray. We can't lose sight of the face of the Master. We are praying to God and trying to get a glimpse of the face of the Father; our eyes rest upon the countenance of the Son. I never can get nearer to God than Christ takes me, and I never want God to be other than Christ is. If the Eternal is like Jesus, then it is well with humanity all the time.

One more familiar and homely figure. Last Thursday there were not quite so many people here as there are now. Many of you had gone for a holiday. A number of you who were here last Thursday, and who would dearly like to have been out of London and away at the dear old home, will appreciate what I am

going to say. Here is the sort of letter that one of you wrote home—the young fellows behind the counter, I mean:

“DEAR MOTHER: I can’t get off this Easter. I should only have one day, and I am rather short of money, and it is a long way home. Could you not persuade father to send me a sovereign or two before Whitsuntide, and I will come home then and have one week-end with you.”

That was a prayer, was it not, sent to somebody far away, but somebody on whom you can count. You know perfectly well that dear old lady will wring that money out of your father, be he never so scrupulous, though he can tell her all kinds of wise things about the way in which you are sure to behave with it when you might get it. She will get it beforehand, and you will have it in time, with a carefully made-out list of the railway trains and her advice to you to take the earliest of the lot. And when you see her face to face you will simply have a closer vision of the face that you have seen all the time. You sent your first request to an atmosphere of personal experience, which will be intensified, but not something new, when you meet her by-and-bye in the holiday time you have been seeking for. I know not that we can come very much nearer to the great heart of things than by such symbolism as this. God is at once Father and Mother, and I often think that the mother side of God is to be sought in Christ. I am not the first to have said that by a great deal. He is the pledge and the guarantee of the goodwill of the Father. We not only pray in

His Spirit, but His Spirit teaches us to pray. More than that, His promise is towards you and me, that as our prayers ascend from the lower to the higher humanity, from our needy soul to the Christ who has been touched with the feeling of our infirmity, it is through and by Him that you have passed on, passed on to the heart of the Father. We have a Mediator who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Think of that, you men, who have been making ducks and drakes of your opportunities. Think of the boundless pity at the heart of our Father-Mother God, our Brother Christ. Think of that ceaseless solicitude for the souls of men, which knows no change, or ever shall till earth's foundations melt away. Think of it when you are low down in the depths of despondency, when you feel your human weakness most, and get up again and be strong, for the spiritual man is the strongest of men, seeing he is joined to the Spirit of all, and is abiding in Christ Jesus. Mary Queen of Scots used to say she feared the prayers of John Knox more than she feared an army of many thousand men. There are men in the world to-day who do not appear much in the newspaper, and whose names are seldom on the lips of the public; but some day you will find out how many currents and influences they have been setting going in the world of things seen and unseen. There are some people who are omnipotent—I am not using the language of extravagance—omnipotent for the things that they want. They can lay firm hold on the things of God, and they can be trusted with His things, for they have been taught by the spirit of Christ ere they knelt to pray.

Dr. Parker once said to me, in his impulsive, hyper-

bolical fashion, "I know a man who, if he were to pray for that chimney, would have it; it would come itself. I never could do that. But I should be much more afraid of that man's prayers than I should of an Act of Parliament." That was only his forceful, pungent, eager way of putting a profound spiritual truth. Prayer is the explanation of personal value; prayer is working with the arm of God; prayer is converse with the unseen; prayer is listening, as well as speaking. The Master's words abide in us as well as our words abide in Him, and, as I think I have said before, in the words of that mystical poet who changed our outlook upon nature and God a century or more ago—Wordsworth:

"Think you 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?
Nor less I deem that there are powers,
Which of themselves our minds impress,
And we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness."

It is well sometimes to be still in the presence of Christ that He may teach us how to pray, and when once we learn of Him and feel that His Spirit is in harmony with all that we utter and will, we are praying with those who prevail, and the answer to the prayer comes in the moment of the praying. We have set heaven going, and the reply will soon come. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

XVI

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY*

Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.—Isaiah lvii. 15.

I HAD at first intended to take for my text one clause of this verse, and, indeed, I think now that I may venture with you to place the emphasis upon that particular clause, keeping the context in our mind, "With him also." I need not remind you of the circumstances under which the text came to be written or of the state of mind to which the exhortation was directed. Suffice it to say that it was aimed at the heart of a people who, in keeping their conscience, so to speak, had lost the idea of spiritual fellowship with God. In obedience to what they believed to be the demands and exactions of the law of God, they had forgotten God Himself; therefore they were reminded of the true condition of heart under which a man can expect to approach God, and to be accepted of Him. They were told in effect, in this prophetic language, that only that character is acceptable to God in which humility is the most prominent ingredient. Nay, would we not be justified in going so far as to say that not character but spirit is the

* Preached in Union Church, Brighton, Sunday morning, September 15, 1901.

essential condition upon which we can enter into relationship with God? For no human character, however exalted, can claim to be sinless, but every human character, however seemingly pure, or however utterly debased, can blend at once with the spirit of God if it possesses the spirit of lowliness. That is the message that the prophet endeavours here to convey.

It is of the highest importance in this as in every other generation that men should arrive at right views about God. A very trite observation to make, and yet how much we necessarily attach to it. Not one sermon only, but every sermon, must be concerned with that primary proposition. It is of the first necessity that we should all have and keep right views about the nature of God. The late Master of Balliol, Dr. Jowett, was once addressed by a lady who believed him to be somewhat liberal and vague in his views of religion; she said, "Sir, can you tell us what you really think about God?" The answer was: "Madam, it matters very little what I think about God, but it matters a great deal what God thinks about me." Yet beneath that assertion there was another which you can distinguish at once, namely: It matters very much what I think God thinks about me. It is essential that I should have right views of that Divine nature which is every hour appealing to mine, the one unescapable reality of my life, without which one can neither think, nor speak, nor act. Every man must positively or negatively define his attitude to God. See what mistakes have been made in time past, not by Israel only, but by Christendom, when men have got away from the true conception of the nature of God. They have

defined Him sometimes as an implacable Deity, without pity, without mercy for the frailties of humanity. He has been worshipped in blood; the worship even of the meek and lowly has often been a worship of agony and tears. In past history it has sometimes seemed as though the Christian Church was a malign influence in the world, so prominent were her professors in the infliction of anguishing pain. Men might have been saved all that if they had kept close to intelligent vision and thought of Him whose name and nature are love.

But at the present day it seems as though we are in danger of passing to another extreme. We preach His love, and forget His holiness. For He who is high and lofty above the greatest that humanity can ever conceive has become to us, as it seems, a Being too familiar, whose stock-in-trade is mercy, who is ever waiting to forgive, and whose love is such that He will ever spare the loved, however heinous may be the transgression against Himself. That is not Scriptural, that is not the truth concerning the God whom Jesus came to declare. Awful holiness inaccessible to natural human nature it is. Love is an ingredient and an expression of that holiness, it may be, but it is a love that will not spare the loved. When we sin against Him, we sin to our own hurt. It is impossible for us to live as though there were no God, and not be punished for the sin of that practical godlessness. He dwells in the high and holy place to judge the earth. True, there is a love of God which passeth knowledge, to which we cannot attain even in understanding; but true it is that there is a wrath of God revealed against all the ungodliness and unrighteous-

ness of men. In the present day it seems to me that right views of God need a certain readjustment; a proper emphasis is to be given to both aspects of the character of Him whom we worship, the holy One who inhabiteth eternity. God is love, God is holiness; therefore, it is that the Lord our God is a consuming fire.

One reason why it is essential to have right views of God is because the highest reach of human excellence that has ever yet been known is rather a Divine impulse than a set of rules. Israel made the mistake of reversing those two sets of ideas. None of us can claim any goodness at all. It is, as it were, drawn out of us by an impulse of devotion to a person. Why, that is true in small things as well as great. Every child has his ideal and his hero. I have seen young men who unconsciously had selected the type of character which they wished to make their own, embodied it in a person, and then gave a certain devotion to that person, either for good or ill to their own nature. We read in George Eliot of a character who was saved by devotion to the sweet innocence of a little child. Silas Marner was a miser, somebody came and took away his hoard, and this poor misanthropic, lonely man, who had been wronged by his fellow-creatures and who repudiated them with bitterness, was redeemed from his life of sordidness, and bitterness and anguish of spirit by the sweet innocence of a little child that was left on his hearthrug. His life of devotion to her had something in it akin to reverence; he revered the sweetness and the innocence which, though it be not the highest form of goodness, yet blends with it, and he was saved by that. This again

is Jesus's method. Our Master was his own Gospel. Men came to Him one by one attracted by the winsomeness of Jesus. He spake, of course, as never man spake, and He was as never man was, and, as has been well said by one who has a right to speak upon such subjects, he reversed our ordinary experience about our human ideals. The nearer we draw to an individual, as a rule the more plainly we see the flaws and the crevices in his character; but the nearer men drew to Jesus the more His faultless excellence declared itself; they were drawn to Him, they hardly knew why, with a reverence and a devotion unexampled in the history of the world. We give it now in the same language almost and certainly with the same emphasis that Christendom has always given it:

“ Jesus ! the very thought of Thee
 With sweetness fills my breast,
 But sweeter far Thy face to see,
 And in Thy presence rest.”

He sums up for us everything that is good, and instead of thinking about rules of service we think about Him, and then we are compelled towards the goodness which ever recedes as we approach it, which is a spirit rather than a code. See you that, brethren? The moment we form our conception of God from what we think about Jesus, a divine impulse is communicated to character, men rise above rules and sets of rules, above ritual and observance, above such conditions as the Jews had set themselves, and the prophetic voice speaks not without but within our hearts, when it says, “ Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ”—so holy that we cannot approach unto it—“ I dwell in the high and

holy place with him also," as Jesus did, "that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." When we think upon these things we begin to understand what it is that God expects from us in the service and devotion of the heart.

Does it not sometimes seem as though our first acquaintance with such an ideal as is here presented repels rather than attracts us towards excellence of character and of life? There must be in a congregation such as that now gathered before me one who has given up a little the ideals that he formerly set before him; he has gone back. Let me ask you what you have done it for, and when you have answered the question, then we shall understand what I am trying to advance to, what I may call the repelling influence of Jesus, the cooling influence of Christ upon the human spirit. Once you had high ideals of duty and nobleness, of the excellence of self-sacrifice, of what you might be able to effect by the full obligation of yourself; as you have got older those ideals are chilled. Why? Partly because you have found so little room for their exercise, partly because you have been disappointed in the ungenerous response of humanity, and partly because of the impossibility of climbing to and resting upon that level of attainment that you had marked out for yourself. Think what a difference it makes when the idea recedes, and it seems impossible that you can be carried toward it; chilled is the impulse of your heart toward things that are righteous and good. In the days when Jesus came preaching, men gathered to Him at first with an enthusiasm for an ideal which by-and-bye

dissipated itself. The effect of Jesus upon some of those who knew Him best was to cause fear and awe. In one hour of wonder, when the apostle Peter, who had given himself as he thought body and soul to the Master's service, was surprised by the sudden vision of His greatness, the impulse of his nature was to fling himself down before Christ, and say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The ideal of service within his own heart was chilled by the thought of its impossibility when he came near to the speckless holiness of Christ. I think it has been and is so even now. As we fall into sin, blunder succeeds blunder, failure follows failure, we think how impossible that holy life is, how far away it is; if we think about it at all, the ideal of Christ rebukes it. Jesus chills the impulse even towards Himself by the thought that He Himself is "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Oh, how impossible it is that we can be holy too!

That brings me very close to the message of the text, and I am going to try to show how much that message is the message of Jesus. "With him also!" True it is that Jesus is the high and lofty One, but He dwells with him also who is not good and knows that he is not good; with him also who has failed in life and knows that he has failed; with him also who has come down so low in his own esteem that he can get no lower; with him also this Lord of life and death abides who is of a contrite and humble spirit, with him also abides our Master, not simply to sympathise, but to save, to revive the heart of the contrite one, our Jesus comes. This is the great message of Christianity to the world. It is a message of hope to every heart.

None of us plume ourselves upon what we have done for God, and there is no Christian who would not be willing to confess himself unworthy in His service; the more truly he apprehends what it is that God expects from him, the less is he likely to claim that he has fulfilled that expectation in his own life. You do not want to do that, do you? And the very opposite feeling must not be indulged in. So soon as you have discovered your own failure and unworthiness, so soon have you discovered the Spirit of Christ, who abides with those who need Him most and are conscious of that need. High and lifted up, indeed, He dwells with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.

Let us examine the spirit with which God cannot enter into relationship. There is the spirit of pride, arrogance, self-sufficiency, self-complacency, selfish worldliness, even of self-pity, self-contentment, which passes where it is a spirit which lays no claim to particular excellence, but a spirit which is not prepared for self-abasement. Let us examine our own hearts, and see which of these spirits is predominant in us at the present moment. Your pride will be crushed, your arrogance will be overthrown, your self-complacency will give way in the hour of need; God will show you the shameful side of your self-indulgence presently; there is no room for self-complacency. So, as soon as we begin to understand, how feeble are the props that support our life, how unworthy of trust is this arm of flesh! God can find no entrance into your heart while you think how much is due to you from others, and how little due to them from you. God, who seeks the right spirit in all His children, sometimes brings about the right spirit by indulging

the wrong spirit, until it is filled out. God takes you very gently by the hand and leads you out into the desert place, until you begin to hunger for home; and God will take you and put you in the darkness until you begin to cry out for the light; God will let you go; yea, urge you to go, into the far country, until you learn to know the husks and remember the bread in the Father's house. You who do not know what is the meaning of that which has come to you, which is so hard to bear, so difficult to support, so impossible to understand, might learn from the text. Contrite means crushed; sometimes God in His mercy crushes us into the right spirit for the destruction of the wrong. Jesus, who spake as never man spake, identified Himself with the promise of our text. I only need refer you to Luke iv. for you to see how easy it is of application to the needs of to-day and to yours in particular. In Luke iv. 18 we read that our Lord entered into the synagogue—for He was so well known—and opened the Holy Book, as we have opened it this morning, and quoted the words of the same prophet:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised [the contrite], to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and sat down, and said, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’”

How beautiful it is to think of it! The Lord of the universe, the high and holy One that inhabiteth

eternity, stood amongst men as the lowly One, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister—the truth which seems so impossible for the mind to grasp, but which countless hearts have grasped ere now, that Jesus, who was before all things, came as a suffering Saviour unto His own, yet was rejected by His own. He who dwells in the high and holy place came to dwell with him also that is of a contrite heart and humble spirit; this same Jesus, who is despised and rejected by men, is the Judge to whom account must be given of all our doings in this life of ours. And we are not going away from the spirit of the text if we identify Him with that which it contains; with him also dwells this Jesus, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit. Brethren, think of it, the Lord of the universe hanging on a cross, agonised, shamefully intreated, rejected of men; the suffering Messiah giving Himself for the sins of men, dwelling “with him also”—you and I, each one of us, who are of a contrite and humble spirit, and have discovered our need of the forgiveness of God. This is the very essence of the Gospel. We talk not about Christ so much as an ideal as a Saviour, when we have right views about God, and have entered deep into the conception of His nature, to save men. We think of Him as the one who “was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” A modern poet places in the mouth of an Oriental who is supposed to have

been listening to the words of Jesus some such sentiment as this:

“ If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man—I say
That of all mankind, I will cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave alway.”

“ If Jesus Christ is a God—
And the only God—I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air.”

If Jesus Christ is what He claimed to be, and can do what He claimed to do; if He has power on earth to forgive sins, and to revive the hearts of the contrite ones, it is only because He Himself has been crushed. We approach One who has been bruised for our transgression, wounded for our iniquity; the chastisement of our peace is upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. Let us take the message of that text to our hearts, and we will follow it as between ourselves and God, and take it as a personal message.

XVII

THE ANTIPHONY OF PENITENCE

The son said: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said: Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.—Luke xv. 21-22.

IN this chapter we have the substance of our Lord's teaching on the great mystery of repentance and remission of sins. This teaching was given, according to some of the best expositors, to a very composite and heterogeneous body, perhaps that one which was gathered together on a certain historic occasion in the courtyard of the house of Matthew the Publican. The chapter opens, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The significance of those few words reaches far. Our Lord had just completed His synagogue ministry; He had given His message to those who were waiting for the deliverance of Israel; and now He hungered and thirsted to carry the tidings of the Divine Fatherhood and love to that great congregation which was without the synagogue—the despised, the outcast, the publicans and sinners. To that end, say some, He asked Matthew the Publican to prepare a great feast in his

house, and to bring there such persons as he could find and whom hitherto Christ had not known.

The teaching contained in this chapter is presented in picture form. Three parables occupy the whole space—the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son. It is significant that the first two parables teach one side of the truth the other side of which is taught by the third. It is remarkable, too, that our Lord employs two parables to teach the Divine side of the great mystery of repentance, and only one parable to teach the other, but necessary, side of the same mystery—the human side. The first and second parables close with substantially the same words—“joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” But is not this strange language? and is not this Teacher, who spake as never man spake before, a little mistaken in the application of His own figure? For the sheep, according to our notions of repentance, did not repent; it stayed away, and remained lost until the shepherd went to find it, and the only part that the sheep had to do with the rescue was in submitting to be picked up and carried on the shoulders of the good shepherd. And the lost piece of silver did not, and could not, repent; it remained lost until the woman who had missed it re-discovered it and put it back in the place whence it had fallen. No, there are no mistakes, as we shall see. It is not the parable of the prodigal that comes first; it is the parable of the lost sheep, and that of the lost piece of silver; and our Lord means us to imply, surely, that repentance is but the climax, the consummation of a state of mind in which God seeks man before man seeks God. Our

text is the epitome of this teaching, and we have a Divine side and a human side to the great mystery. The human side, which is but the response to the Divine overture, is this: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son"; and the Divine side is: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and let us rejoice and be glad, for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

We have, therefore, in the text, remembering the setting in which it is found, two main lines of thought: first, the attitude of the penitent towards God; and second, the Divine response to the cry of contrition.

I. The attitude of the penitent is expressed in the words, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called a son; make me a servant." There is some difference between the act of repentance in which this expression culminates and the feeling itself in which it takes its rise. Penitence is a state of feeling; repentance is an act of the will. In the one word stress is laid upon the state of the mind; the second places stress upon the will—repentance is rising and going to the Father. There may be a quasi-penitential feeling without any repentance at all, and there may be true repentance—and often is—in which there is very little of contrite sorrow for sin. How often people get wrong about that! I remember that once a man came to see me after one of the services in my church at Brighton, and told me one of the most pitiful stories I had ever heard. He said: "I am here to-night not because I care for your gospel,

or particularly want to hear it, but because my father asked me to do him one last service; I am here for a few moments, and then I am going back to a companionship and environment which is ruin. By sin I have been committed to the custody of sin; I have broken my mother's heart, and I am bringing down my father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. And I cannot get free; it seems as if a thousand devils were dragging me down to hell." I said: "There is nothing so fatalistic in your experience as that; turn round, go right, repentance is but a turning from sin and a turning towards God." He said: "I cannot repent; I cannot feel towards God as you preachers would have us feel; I must go back to the place I have left, and I can imagine no greater hell than the life I am living. But I cannot repent." What a mistake that man made! What a mistake thousands of people are making to-day as to the true and inner meaning of repentance! Repentance is not necessarily a state of feeling; we may only discover the depth of the pit whence we were digging long after our repentance has been accepted of God. Penitence is one thing; repentance is another—the climax of a state of mind in which God seeks man before man seeks God, but in which man says: "I will arise and go to my Father; I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me a servant, but have me at home again." The proper attitude of the penitent is such as is described in the Word before us. One might say, we ask nothing of God, save that we may be taken out of the atmosphere and the thralldom of sin, placed in His presence, given another chance, though not the chance

that was forfeited—"I am no more worthy to be a son; make me a servant."

"Yes, Thou forgivest, but with all forgiving
Canst not renew mine innocence again;
Make Thou, O Christ, a dying of my living,
Purge from the sin but never from the pain."

II. What is the attitude of God towards the penitent? What is the Divine response to contrition? The Gospel of Christ: there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved. The response is this: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him"—the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation; not the second-best, but the best robe, the best there is—a way up from the lowest depths of the valley of humiliation to the shining height of holiness where dwelleth God. It is not mine to explain that mystery. All I have to do is to declare it—that is the prophet's office. It is a mystery so deep that though we live for evermore we can never fathom its mighty depths. From the lowest depths of the valley of humiliation there is a way up to the shining heights where dwelleth God. The vilest sinner may become as the serenest saint. But this seems a contradiction, a physiological impossibility; how can that which hath been be as though it had never been? How can a man who has forfeited his opportunity, been associated with sin, in a manner been its victim, its slave—how can he ever be freed from it? I do not know; nobody knows; we know it is done. The passion of Christ, the Cross of Calvary, and all that is signified there, have something to do with the purification, the cleansing of the soul from sin; and there

is no stumbling-block placed in the way of a man who would rise to God. How to make this clearer I know not. All I know is that everyone needs to know it; for there is none righteous, no, not one.

I remember once, in preaching, giving an example from the Roman Catholic tradition concerning Mary the Magdalene. Roman Catholic tradition says that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany were one and the same. I do not say they were; it is a tradition that they were. After saying that from the pulpit a woman came to me and said: "I wish you hadn't said that; you have done great injustice to Mary of Bethany; you have made me think differently of her now; you have driven her from the sacred place in my spiritual imagination. But I don't believe it," she continued; "Mary of Bethany never was the Magdalene. I cannot think it; she was too pure." "Then," I said, "there is something that the Gospel of Christ cannot do, and there is a stage of human sin, a plane of experience upon which, if you once get, you must stop." The world says that soon enough. We are often told that we make forgiveness too easy from the pulpit; the fact is, it is the hardest thing possible to convince a man he has forgiveness at all. The ordinary man associates forgiveness of sin with remission of the consequences. But we are not told that the prodigal went back to share once more the substance that he spent in riotous living. No; what he wanted was to get back to the father. His attitude was, "I am no more worthy to be called a son; make me a servant," and the antiphony of that cry was, "My son was dead and is alive again; bring forth the best robe and put it on him." These white and fleecy clouds that float

in the azure vault of heaven, whence came they? Yesterday they were trampled underfoot in the mire and filth of London streets. These beauteous flowers, radiant of colour, perfect of form, breathing the aroma of springtime, whence came they? Yesterday they arose from foul-smelling filth and corruption, drawn thence by the sunlight of heaven. What are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Magdalen may become as the brightest saint of God. The man who has forfeited his opportunities may get something better back again. How often we are told in language that seems hopeless—ay, in the language of ordinary human experience—in the words of Omar Khayyám;

“The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
 Moves on : nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.”

It is a different Gospel before us now. The Divine response to the cry of contrition is, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” Those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb are pure and white in the presence of the Father. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as wool.”

There are at least three orders of experience to which the words of our text are specially applicable. First, the man who has been, and everybody knows has been, a prodigal. It may be you have found your way into this house of

prayer, and taken your place amongst the people of God; but you are not ordinarily to be found here, you scarcely know why you are here now. Perhaps it is that in early childhood you remember the sweet sound of the name of Jesus; it meant something to you then—how much you did not know until you had been in a far country. There came one day when you went forth to see life, as you called it—seeing the life that is only a synonym oftentimes for seeing hell—you went forth to the great city to push your way, and in doing it you forfeited your innocence, you sinned against God and society, and the former punished you through the latter. Society has closed its doors upon you, and everybody knows you have been punished for your transgression. You cannot go back to the place that you have forfeited; you cannot be as though you had never sinned; and, what is more, you cannot feel as though you had never sinned. You think to yourself, as you stand in the far country feeding upon husks, Glad would I have been if I could have the old home back again! Now, everybody would say it is fitting and right that I should preach to that prodigal whom everybody knows to be a prodigal in the words of my text: “I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called a son; make me a servant”; but then the antiphony comes—sound of grace and sweetness and mercy!—“Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” You are wanted up there, and there is a place for you.

But there is a second order of experience, not quite so obvious, in which the words of my text are equally applicable. Here sits a man whom people do not

know to be a prodigal. He has done well in the world; he has obtained place and power and high repute; he is a great subscriber to things philanthropic and religious. People bow to him and speak good of his name. He says very little concerning the inner man; but if you could get there and hear his own story—years ago you purchased your success by a foul and filthy lie, you did a mean and shameful thing, you trampled upon somebody weaker than yourself, you sold your soul for gold. You have got what you aimed at; you have succeeded in everything for which you tried; what you lived for and strove for has come to you. Do you want it? In that far country are you, and feeding upon husks, though you sit in the corner pew in the church. And on the other side—what a revulsion there comes! It was not worth doing wrong for—nothing ever is in this world, as said George Eliot. If we could stand again on the other side of sin there is no man but would say that to gain something, to get the very thing you sought is punishment. A man would rather be without the fruits of his iniquity once he has experienced them. These prodigals that men do not know to be prodigal, these men in a far country feeding upon the husks—do they not want the Gospel? and is not the ring of the Gospel which I preach the very thing they want? You think that by sin you are committed to the custody of sin; you are compelled to stay in the place in which you put yourself; you cannot retrace that path back to the Father's home that you left so many years ago; no, you cannot take that journey unless somebody comes to the far country to you. That is it! Every figure fails somewhere, and even our Lord's illustra-

tion of the Prodigal Son cannot teach everything that He wanted to teach, and which is contained within His own Gospel. From that far country the prodigal has a long journey back to the Father; but the truth is, that in the far country is the Good Shepherd who has come to find His sheep. You would not be troubled about your sin but that God is already thinking about you; and you might say to yourself—as I trust you do—in the words of a great saint, “Thou wouldst not seek Him if Thou hadst not already found Him.” The son said: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son; make me a servant.” The Father says: “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.”

But there is a third order of experience, in which we are all included. Every man and woman who has found his or her way into a place of worship must be conscious, or has been conscious to a greater or less extent, of a great dissatisfaction with things as they are, and you wish that the world had not such a hold upon you as it has. But a few minutes ago we were in the streets of the great city, amid the roar of the traffic, taking our part in the battle of life; and it cannot be but that we have been to some extent influenced by the traffic with which we have engaged, and we want to get free, and we say:

“Oh, for a man to arise in me that the man I am might cease to be!”

There is none of us who, when he comes to himself, could say other than this: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more

worthy to be called Thy son; make me a servant." We ask for nothing but to get to God, to hold the hand of Christ; nothing but to rescue our manhood, and re-make it in the Spirit of our Lord, who died for us.

What is to be done? Thank God for the promise! We have not been left to ourselves. Out in that far country the Good Shepherd has been looking for His sheep; we are just God's little ones, away from home, as it seems, and He alone can bring us back. The Shepherd has come to find His sheep. Now let us come hand in hand to the Throne of Grace, and we will repeat the word of the prodigal—for such are we, whether the world knows it or not—"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called a son; make me a servant." And then—O, mystery of Love Divine!—there comes in the accents of the Elder Brother: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Let us rejoice and be glad in the presence of the angels of God; for this my son," saith the Father—"my brother," saith the Saviour—"was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

XVIII

THE DAYSPRING

The dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.—Luke i. 78-79.

IN this beautiful Advent song we have a fitting expression for our thoughts this Christmas morning, and a happy motto for the great Christian festival which we meet to celebrate. There is a slight, but not unimportant, difference in phrasing between the text as it appears in the older and in the Revised Version of the New Testament respectively; the former reads thus: "The dayspring from on high hath visited us," and the latter reads, probably more accurately, "The dayspring from on high shall visit us." There is no contradiction; each version is needed to complete the other. Zacharias, looking forward upon the Birth which was to come, would say: "The dayspring from on high shall visit us," but he might as fittingly have said, "The dayspring from on high hath visited us," and we still more fitly can say this morning, looking back past Calvary to the cradle at Bethlehem: "The dayspring from on high hath visited us"; the world can never again be as though Christ had not come; and, looking forward upon the age that has not dawned, we can say: "The dayspring

from on high shall visit us"—"Ring in the Christ that is to be."

The incarnation of the Son of God did not begin with the lowly birth at Bethlehem; it began when time began; it is still going on. The Christ was in the world ages before Jesus was laid in the manger beneath the lowly cattle-shed; He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. And the Christ has never gone away; He is in the world to-day, known and loved and trusted by multitudes of those who through Him have received the adoption of sons. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Christ is born anew every morning, and as many as receive Him to them gives He power to become the sons of God. "The dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

What do we mean by incarnation? Suffer me to recall your attention to this very familiar but little understood word. You think you know what it means, and you do, partly. You would say at once: "It is God becoming man." You are right, but we might invert the phrase, and say much more truly, it is man becoming God. The incarnation is the process whereby humanity is being taken to its home in God or, better still, the incarnation is the discovery that humanity is in God.

"Follow you the star that lights the desert pathway, yours
or mine,

Till you see the highest human nature is Divine."

You may be tempted to say, as men have said before,

"The birth at Bethlehem is a beautiful and tender manifestation of the Secret Eternal, but how could it be that in that tiny infant, that speck of humanity, dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; how could it be that that little hand, so helpless, was fitted to hold and to wield the sceptre of the universe?" You are God yourself, and God is everything that you are, and infinitely more. Humanity is one, and came to itself in Jesus, our Head, who for us and with us looks up into the face of the Father, saying My God! In Jesus Christ, and in the lowly birth at Bethlehem, we have learnt our solidarity; we are one and indivisible. Individuality is precious, but humanity is not divided. One great family are we, with one Elder Brother, one Master, one Head, one Shepherd, Redeemer, and Lord—Jesus Christ—in whom we have all the fulness of God. In Him we have found how near has God come. "The dayspring from on high hath visited us."

There is, therefore, a peculiar fitness in the figure which is suggested in our text—"the dayspring," in other words, the sunrise. When we see the orb of day slowly coming upwards on the eastern horizon, we say the day is coming, the sun is rising again upon a darkened world. But you know well what is taking place; the world has been rolling from the dark shadows into the vast ocean of light. When we say "the dayspring from on high," we say humanity has been turning out of darkness into light; we are learning to look into the face of God; the dayspring from on high hath visited us, we have lifted our faces to the light, we are being guided into the paths of peace, the shadows are fleeing before the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings.

The associations of Christmas Day are so winsomely beautiful, so poetically tender, that this has become the sweetest of festivals recognised by the Christian Church, and so long as there is a place in human nature for poets, for the mystic, the spiritual, the tender, so long will Christmas Day hold its place. This is the day when joy and sorrow shake hands, when we feel, although we do not say, that sorrow and joy condition each other, that the former explains and declares the latter. This is the day for reunion, when heart clasps heart; the day when we have time and impulse to be kind, the day when we forget and forgive, the day when brotherhood is recognised, the day when we come nearest to breaking down that unbreakable partition which is ever between soul and soul. This is the day when we recognise in the very pathos of things the nearness of God. While humanity is what it is, this festival must hold its place, associated with the name that is above every name. But why the name of Jesus? There have been other names in history. Cæsar, Charlemagne, Hildebrand—why do you not keep the birthday of these? Few, if any of you, know when it is, and you do not care. Yet the first descendant of the Cæsar sat upon the throne in Imperial Rome when Jesus was laid in the lowly cattle-shed. It matters little to-day about Cæsar, but it matters so much about Christ that in temples all over the land congregations come together to sing praises to His name. Why not Charlemagne? That great king and emperor was crowned, I think, on Christmas Day, 800, in St. Peter's, at Rome, and history took a new start from the event. What would it matter to you had he never been crowned at all? We sing to-day:

"All hail the power of Jesu's name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, yet King of kings and Lord of lords; it is the birthday of the Prince of Peace that is precious to us, and not the crowning day of Charlemagne. Why not Hildebrand? Here was one who claimed to be lord of the visible universe, reigning in the name of Christ, master of emperors, king of kings, the vicar of God, the author of the most magnificent failure in history. On a certain wonderful day I see Hildebrand, Pope and prince, sitting in his castle at Canosa, and outside the gate, standing in the snow, is the Emperor himself, suing for mercy at the feet of the vicar of Christ. Day after day there he stands, day after day there sits Hildebrand, magnificent in his ecclesiastical authority and power, ruling in the name of Jesus. Where has that pretension gone to? We do not want it to-day. We would not have it to-day; no Pope, no Archbishop, no temporal dominion of the Church of Christ can claim authority over the minds and consciences and independence of men to-day. But as the power of the organised Church has crumbled into nothing the authority of Jesus has been like a rising sun. Higher than ever He stands to-day in the esteem of humanity, the festival of His birth the sweetest Sabbath of the Church. There is an ideal greater than the failure of Hildebrand—the ideal of the kingdom of God which cometh not with observation, preached by the lowly Jesus who had not where to lay His head.

Jesus has brought to light truths the world does

not take sufficient account of, but which it will never let go, and of these the first is the nearer vision of God. It comes so natural to us to say: "Abba, Father!" Where did you learn that word for God? "Oh, the fishermen heard it from the lips of Jesus. But perhaps somebody else said it before." Ah, very likely, but it made all the difference when Jesus said it. When we say, "Father" we think of the Son, and when men have looked into the heart of Christ and learned there, they have said to themselves, What must the Father be? "Lord, shew us the Father and we shall be satisfied." "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" Through that glorified sonship we read the Fatherhood divine. God has come near. The pain of humanity remains, the discipline of life continues still, the shadow has not lifted, but the light is shining upon it; Christ did not abolish pain, but He brought God into it, and on Christmas Day some of us are able to affirm:

"Labour is rest and pain is sweet
If Thou, my God, art near."

He has given us another hope; life is bigger, the horizon is wider, we are looking beyond, and "the best is yet to be." God has laid Himself alongside every human experience. Christ might have come otherwise—on the clouds of heaven, to the sound of the trumpet, with glory, pomp, and power; but He did not, He was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger, and somehow the instinct of humanity affirms that was the way that God should come. In the meek and lowly Jesus, in the humble love of that self-manifestation, we have

the ultimate, the last revelation of the heart of God. There is nothing more that you need to know. Jesus brought to us a new humanity. Unconsciously we have been shaping our ideals since we began to think—young men are unconsciously or sub-consciously looking to this man and that, to this type of character and the other, wherewith to shape theirs—and we think with justice of the strong men who have stood in the past for the right, the good, and the true. Beyond, behind, above, humanity had been looking wistfully, gladly, toward the type which is higher, the Man of men, the norm of what humanity ought to be. When we see a good man and love a good man, we mentally measure him against the stature of Christ; is he like Him? then he is good; how near does he come to Him? That is the measure of goodness.

How the ideal of the Christ has entered into every department of human interest and activity! I need hardly tell you who is Tennyson's Christ—it is King Arthur. Christ the King looks out from these pages. The sublimest scene, incident, or passage in "The Idylls of the King" is the parting of Arthur from his sinful, shame-stricken queen. There she lies, groveling at his feet, beautiful still, quivering with the shame of her degraded womanhood, not daring to look up into his kingly face. Here beside her, bending over, stands Arthur, the prince without fear and without reproach, and he stoops and blesses her, as he parts, with the prophecy that they two shall meet before high God, and claim each other for their own. As he passes from her presence Guinevere raises her head, and sobs out in passionate utterance:

"Gone—my lord !

Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain !
 And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
 Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.
 His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
 My own true lord ! how dare I call him mine ?
 The shadow of another cleaves to me,
 And makes me one pollution : he, the King,
 Call'd me polluted ; shall I kill myself ?
 What help in that ? I cannot kill my sin,
 If soul be soul ; nor can I kill my shame ;
 No, nor by living can I live it down.

I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
 Let the world be ; that is but of the world.
 What else ? what hope ? I think there was a hope,
 Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope.

Blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
 My wickedness to him, and let me hope
 That in mine own heart I can live down sin
 And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
 Before high God.

It was my duty to have loved the highest ;
 It surely was my profit had I known ;
 It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
 We needs must love the highest when we see it,
 Not Lancelot, nor another."

Tennyson's Christ, Christ the King; Tennyson's gospel, the gospel of pardon; Tennyson's future, the future hope. Where did he get it? He never created it, he only saw it in the Jesus of Galilee, who, before His judges, spake: "Thou sayest it because I am a king." There is to me a sweeter vision than this. Charles Dickens has a Christ. Dickens had a favourite book; his favourite child, he said, was David Copperfield, and his Christ is Peggotty, the fisherman. There is a con-

trast and a similiarity here. Arthur and Peggotty, at the two extremes of the social scale, are one and the same, and their norm is Christ. The sublimest scene, the tenderest passage in this book, is Peggotty's recovery of his little Em'ly. He tells the story himself, in his quaint, colloquial English, the first night after Em'ly comes home, or, rather, the first night after he had found her and brought her back :

All night long we have been together, Em'ly and me. 'Tis little (considering the time) as she has said, in wureds, through them broken-hearted tears ; 'tis less as I have seen of her dear face, as grow'd into a woman's at my hearth. But, all night long, her arms has been about my neck ; and her head was laid heer ; and we knows full well, as we can put our trust in one another ever more.

The tender presentment of Christ, the fisherman—where did he get it? Even that great literary genius did not create it, he saw it. Peggotty is Christ, the Christ of Galilee, who said: "Go in peace and sin no more."

Many who are thinking of the Christ, and the redemption, the love, and the power of Christ, both to save and to keep, must be turning to Him as the one central hope for our every need. But there are some who cannot worship Him joyfully on this Christmas Day. You are thinking of that height from which you fell, of that opportunity that you once let go, and which will come no more for ever ; you are thinking of the manhood you have destroyed, the womanhood you have polluted, and you are looking up to the darksome eternal, and asking if the mystery has any word for you. It has—Arthur's word, Peggotty's word, Jesus' word. For the high and the low there is but

one Christ, the Christ in whom Christians believe, the Dayspring from on high, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Some of you find it difficult to be glad. You remember a life that once was and never again will be here; you are thinking of those who made life for you, but who have gone into the darkness of that mysterious future, by that lonely road which we must all tread; and now the world is shadowed. Will it ever be the same again? Have we time to be glad? is it fitting that we should? You are thinking maybe of that burden of yesterday which you laid down at the door of this church, going in for a few brief moments to think about the things that are not seen; but you know you are going to take it up to-morrow, and as you think of your loneliness and helplessness, you are tempted to say: How can I be glad about Christ?

“ We spake of many a vanished scene,
Of what we once had thought, and said,
Of what had been, and might have been,
And who was changed, and who was dead,
And all that fills the hearts of friends
When first they feel, with secret pain,
Their lives henceforth have separate ends,
And never can be one again.”

The Lord of life and death, the Babe of Bethlehem, is Conqueror. That tiny hand has shown itself able to comfort and to heal many a broken heart, and it holds the sceptre of the world; and the best is waiting for you. Live for the highest, the only thing worth living for; follow the Crucified, though it be to Calvary. Some of you are willing to take your stand be-

side the cradle, but not in Gethsemane. You must follow Him all the way, for on the farther side there is the fulfilment of everything that is best for you by the Saviour who has gone to prepare the place. Oh, the dayspring from on high is shining and shall shine more and more until the perfect day.

XIX

GOD'S NEW YEAR

There was no more sea.—Rev. xxi. 1.

IN Greek thought and in Hebrew religion the sea was the emblem of mystery. This book of Revelation was written by a man who was familiar with Greek thought, as the prologue to the Fourth Gospel shows. Yet he was himself a Hebrew, and wrote about a religion which, though it was destined to be universal, had its beginnings at Jerusalem. Perhaps the use in Israelitish song of the sea as a symbol of mystery and dread had its origin as far back as that instance which we read for our lesson—"The Lord, with a strong hand, led His chosen people to deliverance through the midst of the sea." Compare, for instance, with our text the language of Psalm lxxvii., which is evidently inspired by the gratitude felt by Israel for that great historic salvation. "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." Compare that piece of poetry with the well-known lines of our English poet, William Cowper:

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

The seer of Patmos had some such feeling as this in his heart, and takes a far outlook with wide and glorious vision, when he sees the coming end even of the mystery, when there shall be no need for the symbol—"I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea."

We all feel life to be a mystery; we cannot help it, and the older we grow the deeper does the mystery become. Your little child can ask you—perhaps has asked you—questions that the wisest of men cannot answer. Christina Rossetti sings:

" The mystery of life, the mystery
Of death I see
Darkly, as in a glass ; their shadows pass
And talk with me."

Was it not Charles Dickens who wrote, " This world is a world of sacred and solemn mystery; let no man despise it or take it lightly"? Our life—the life of any man—is but a moment between two eternities—that which has been and that which is to come. Life begins, continues, and ends in mystery. I have often heard a man say—so doubtless have you—" I wish one could see any meaning in it all; life is a mystery to which there is no solution." I have heard many men say, " We give up trying to find any solution; do your duty in the day. Do not seek to probe into what may have no meaning. Life is a mystery, and we cannot find the key." Just now that is the fashionable attitude and the so-called reasonable thing to say—" Don't speculate, be practical; life is a mystery. Live as you can in the fleeting moment, doing bravely what

is in you to do." There are worse creeds than that, but few of us can remain in that condition of suspended judgment. We want a key for the door; we want to know what is on the other side, that we may understand something of the meaning of our own life.

The mystery presents itself in myriad forms. Let me just say briefly how it has come to some of you during the past year. Here is one person into whose experience death came for the first time last year. It is very remarkable, but none of us feel that death has anything to do with us until it actually comes. We hear about visitations in other families, and are sorry for the sufferers, but we feel that Death is a stranger that has nothing to do with our home circle. We do not like to think of his possible advent, nor can we picture to ourselves what life would be like if Death really came. Well, here is one to whose home Death did come last year and took away the very person whom you could least afford to spare, and that is a thing he often does. Before that blow fell you thought you would be sure to go first, but it was not so; and you have not been able to see anything kind in that call of the grim spectre. You remember how you felt the next morning; you had to go to the great city to work, and when you heard men talking as if nothing had happened, and when you saw them busy here and there labouring for the meat which perisheth, you could not help stopping to ask yourself, "Is it not all a dream? What a weird mockery is this! The real to me was that something which is lying cold and still in what was once my home." You have managed to right yourself a little since, but you look forward on the new year in a very different mood from that in

which you faced the old. Because of that visit of death life is to you a deeper mystery than it was before.

Then here is a man who last year went through the greatest sorrow of his life; in fact, experienced the complete overthrow of that for which he had lived. You know what I mean, maybe. You had pinned all your hopes to the future of that life, for whom you toiled, sacrificed, suffered, and counted the sacrifice not dear. Now where is he—dead? Better if he were! Perhaps you are so much in a sadder position than he whom I have just instanced that you will say it would be good news if you could know that that boy of yours was in his coffin, rather than where he is and what he is. You can't help saying to yourself, as you sit among people who pray, and perhaps you don't pray, "To what purpose was this waste? If there be any meaning in life at all, why is it that my life, which was not selfishly lived, appears to have been lived only for torture? My boy has failed me." Yet you would be crucified to save him if you could. "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!"

Here is another—how different an experience is his! He sits in a corner of a pew, solitary, unnoticed; the frost of age is on his hair. He makes no complaint, there is no eagerness in his outlook, no protest in his prayer. He is patient, resigned, still. Ah, young man, you would never dream that that old man once had as much spring in his step as you have in yours, and as much hope in his heart as you cherish for the opening year. Once he felt as you do, in the pride of your youth—and you are right to do it—that you are going to conquer life and wrest the golden secret out

of fate. He thought all that; his experience was hope deferred, and now it is hope gone. He knows what fate has to give him; it is to be a hewer of wood, a drawer of water to other people all the days of his life. Yet he feels that he has not lived out, and never had the chances to live out, what there was in him to be and to do. It is a mystery, is it not, that he never could and never shall? Here is a man who has only a little corner of his life (does any man live any more?); life has been an illusion, a disappointment, and as he draws near to the dark river he says to himself, "A mystery, a mystery! I am no nearer to the meaning than I was at first."

Here are all these stories of struggle, poverty, shame, and sin. What is that strong man who is conscious of a weak will and mighty passion, and who says to God, "Strange that You have made me so that I so easily do evil and so hardly do good! I am not master of myself. If You had made me as passionately earnest to pray as I am passionately earnest to gratify the flesh, life would have been very different for me to-day. Where is the good of making resolutions when I know the history of the past year?" Mystery! Surely God's ways are in the sea, in that any of these stories can be told at all.

The pain of life is just in the mystery. If we knew, there would not be any pain. It is that we do not know, as we look forward upon the undiscovered future, and strain our eyes with peering into the gloom trying to see what is to be, that the pain comes. Hence it is that some of you, standing on the thresh-old of another year, view it with a certain misgiving. What has this coming year in store? Mystery!

Suffer me to say that there is a value in mystery, and that I will make you see it. Listen to this mother training her little boy. "Tell the truth," she says. "Be sure you tell the truth; now tell me the truth and I will give you this toy." He looks at his mother, then at the toy, and when he has gazed on the latter, the truth is told. What do you think of the moral effect of the lesson? Here is another lesson: listen to this father. He stands face to face with a similar culprit; he loves him quite as much. "My lad, you be a man; tell the truth and shame the devil. Did you do this, or didn't you?" The boy looks up at his father, something of the same spirit comes to him, and he says, "I did." Which was the better lesson? That which was given without the toy. The one knew the reward of the truth-telling and the other did not. There was a certain value in the mystery. Men are but children of a larger growth.

Here is another story, which is not fancy. There is a man in my church who said:

"The memory of my father is a sacred influence to me; yet I can remember the day when I was hungry because of my father's conduct, and I could not understand it. I can remember my mother crying as she cut the last loaf, keeping none for herself, and gave to us what there was. My father had been turned from his business rather than do a mean and shabby thing. They gave him three days to think of it, and then he came home with no prospects and no money. I remember my mother taking the two eldest of us to one side, and saying, 'It breaks my heart to see you hungry, but I will tell you what kind of a man your father is'; and she told us. Many a time since I have

been tempted to do wrong, and there rose before me the figure of the man who dared even to see his children suffer before he could sully his conscience and sin against God."

Supposing somebody had come to that father on the morning of his heroism and had said, "I will stand by you if you will do the brave thing now," where would the heroism have been? The heroism was in that he did not know what would come; he could not see the future. He only knew and he only did the right. Character is formed by knowing, and by not knowing. Everything noble in you, if there is any, is formed by knowing and by not knowing—knowing what is right, not knowing whether it will pay; knowing what you ought to do, not knowing what you have to suffer for it.

" Because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

Thank God for what He has hidden from us, for things that are given in mystery; thank God for that feeling which we have, that instinct, which is alongside conscience, that on the other side of the mystery the right is reigning.

" Right is right since God is right,
And right the day must win.
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

It is not all mystery—no mystery ever is. Every man knows two things, or might if he would—duty, blessing. Through all mankind, said a Pagan thinker, conscience is God, and the judgment of each man will be according to how he listened to the

voice. You are never in any doubt about it; it speaks. You do not need a preacher to tell you what to do to-day; you know God has spoken. God ever speaks to those who have ears to hear, and He has spoken to you. It is a marvellous and beautiful thing that the same still, small voice, which comes as the categorical imperative, saying, "You must," says, when the right is done, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" You do not wait for the judgment day for the Master's "Well done." There is all the world of difference between the man who has suffered, being guilty, and the man who would suffer because it was right.

There is a value in the mystery, the value which makes heroism. The world does not want to be without that. Hear Savonarola, the great Florentine prophet, going to his death, as prophets often have to do, at the hands of those he had served and loved. George Eliot makes him say, "I count it nothing. Darkness encompassed me, yet the light I saw was the true light." There is an end to mystery, a golden day, and we shall carry into it that which mystery has given us here. When the day of joy comes you will see that your joy depended upon your pain. Every tone in the organ which is rich and beautiful is only rich because it contains a myriad discords. When you hear a tone which you say is dull, although it happens to be the same note as the tone which you say is rich, you may not know what is the matter. It is because there are no discords in it; but you do not hear the discords; you are not thinking of them. Just so. The highest joy is that in which pain is latent, forgotten; but it has been there. When you

hear a dissonance in a harmony you are instantly on the alert; the discord makes you wait; you wait for the cadence. When you feel pain in this world anywhere, although you know you have lived nobly and right up to your lights, you just wait. Something within tells you the cadence is coming, sometimes on this side of death, sometimes on the other; but it will come, when the shadows have departed and the mists have rolled away.

We are meant to see—God means every man to see—the whole scheme from the beginning, the meaning of your life, and He lets you see some of it even now. You do not walk in thick darkness all the time. Look back over the past year, yes, and far beyond that. What do you see? Goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life. When you went wrong, pain brought you back; when you did right and it seemed as if everything were wrong, it was only that you were wrong in your judgment. Now you see that things that were veiled in thick darkness were right, after all, so much so that the very last thing you wanted has come to be the thing you would choose if your time came over again. How often it has been that the thing you prayed might not come did come, but the thing you dreaded in it did not come! God's ways were in the sea; you went on dry land through the midst of the sea, and, looking back, you see what the deliverance was. Now, looking forward, let me say this. You have nothing to fear, for all your questions are answered beforehand, if you know Him whom to know is life eternal. We know not what awaits us. God kindly veils our eyes, but we know Him whom we have believed, and

are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day—the day of revelation, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and, though many ugly things will come to light, many beautiful things will come to light too. Some of you, of whom the world never hears, that are doing your best in your obscure corners, will stand out then to shine as the noonday in God's new year. God is speaking to you even now in your time of seeking to pierce the mystery. It may be that we seek too much and ask too many questions. Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord which He shall show to you to-day. Do you remember those lines of Wordsworth, the mystic of the late poets?

“ Think you 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?
Nor less I deem that there are powers,
Which of themselves our minds impress,
And we can feed this mind of ours,
In a wise passiveness.”

God's speech comes to the soul of that man who, recognising that His ways are in the sea, thanks Him for what He has not shown, and says, “ My life is hid with Christ in God.”

XX

THE MINOR OFFENCE

Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.—James ii. 10.

IN this, at first sight, somewhat mysterious sentence, there is a profound psychological and spiritual meaning. The truth it contains is one which on reflection every seriously-minded man will affirm. Briefly stated, it is this. Character is all of a piece, woven without seam throughout; goodness is one thing, with many manifestations, each one of which is consistent with all the rest. Every Christian virtue presumes the existence of every other in its possessor; or, rather, there is but one virtue, which shows itself in various lights, and exhibits itself in diverse attitudes. There is only one virtue, whether it show itself as love, generosity, truthfulness, firmness, uprightness, humility, or what not; and the absence of any one so-called Christian virtue means that the rest are vitiated—not merely that the whole character is incomplete, but every single virtue is incomplete by the absence of one.

People dearly love anomaly. They are not prepared to commit themselves to theories until they are sure they will work in practice; and, provided a faulty theory does work fairly well in practice, we are prepared to put up with it. These peculiarities of our

moral constitution sometimes expose us to criticism, partly or wholly deserved; for our national inconsistencies, to a certain extent, are the impressive expression of our individual inconsistencies too. A book has just been published by that acute observer of men and things, and eminent statesman, Mr. Bryce. He calls it "Studies in Contemporary Biography," and it contains sketches of eminent men and their characteristics as known at close quarters to Professor Bryce. In the sketch of Lord Beaconsfield occurs this paragraph:

"English society was then, and perhaps is still, more complex, more full of inconsistencies, of contrasts between theory and practice, between appearances and realities, than that of any other country. Nowhere so much limitation of view among the fashionable, so much pharisaism among the respectable, so much vulgarity among the rich, mixed with so much real earnestness, benevolence, and good sense; nowhere, therefore, so much to seem merely ridiculous to one who looked at it from without, wanting the sympathy which comes from the love of mankind, or even from the love of one's country."

That is a very acute and searching criticism. Nearly everybody would confess it to be true. Just as it is true in the large of English character as a whole, so I believe it is true in the minor world of individuals, and even of professedly Christian character. I would not exempt religious men from the sweeping statements here made. We are composed of contradictions, our religious life bristles with them, and we sometimes forget that Christianity is not a code nor a set of rules; it is a spirit and a life. When

a man has the right spirit, character can almost be left to take care of itself, and when he has not the right spirit, he may call himself religious, but you will find that his character is inharmonious, warring against itself, and while he forgets the perfect obedience to the Master in one point, he has omitted to see that he has vitiated character all through.

I am impressed by certain things which as a sympathetic observer I cannot but see and regret in my acquaintance with men. One of these is the vast amount of unnecessary unhappiness which exists amongst professedly Christian people and in professedly Christian homes. You would get excited in five minutes if instead of talking in this way to you someone were to begin to speak about the income-tax, or the education question, or temperance reform. I sometimes think we shout loudest about the things that matter least. If you will examine it you will find that your happiness does not depend primarily, no, not perhaps even secondarily, on the right solution of any or all of these questions of common and public interest, but rather upon the solution of the problems about little things that you are living in at home. The home is the place where we should in our common life approach nearest to God; not the church, not the business mart, with its discipline, its necessary school, its lessons that will have value in eternity, but in the home we meet with the affinities and the relationships which are in some sort types and symbols of eternal realities. In the home we come closest to each other, and are placed in each other's custody in such wise that surely it is God-given and God-meant for the higher training of the individual soul. If home be

right, men and brethren, you will be better citizens; if home be right, the Church will feel the influence of it; if home be right, our corporate life will not want for good men and true; and if home be wrong, there is something wrong with our religious character and our religious profession. I observe that it is in the minor things that most of the unhappiness is caused which is so common, and which I am perfectly sure exists in the experience of those who are listening to me now. There is, for example, the vice of a dual demeanour, from which so many of us suffer. The City men who listen to me take no end of trouble to be agreeable to those with whom they have to deal. You may say it is nothing more than would be expected from one man in a civilised country in his relations with another. Let us examine sympathetically your behaviour of a day. A perfect stranger whom you never saw before has been occupying your attention for an hour; you have been quoting prices to him, and trying to get him to buy from you this or that good thing of which you have to dispose. It is perfectly wonderful how winsome you have been and mean to be, and with hardly any trouble consciously taken. You exhibit yourself in a favourable light, you try to study your man, and I venture to suppose not altogether with the object of exploiting him. You are prepared to consider him in friendly fashion, and you have given far more of the power of your personality for that man's good opinion than possibly you are aware. If he goes away, having bidden you good-bye, he will carry kindly memories of you; you have made a certain impression upon him; if ever he thinks or speaks of you again he will estimate you

according to that impression. From his point of view, what he thinks of you is you. Now we will go home with you. Somehow there is a different man here. You are perfectly unconscious of it, may be, but as you take off your hat when you enter the hall your whole demeanour undergoes a change. You forget the winsomeness that was necessary when you were quoting prices; there is a difference in your attitude; you don't take so much trouble now to be genial. If anyone were to ask you whether you had been lacking in tenderness, considerateness, sympathy, insight, at home, you would say, "No"—but you are. Thank God it is not universal, but it is sufficiently common for us to give each other pause, and ask whether any professedly Christian man ought ever to have a dual demeanour; the same demeanour which you have to the stranger ought to be the demeanour which you wear at home. If you have a better, if you have a higher altitude to take, take it with the nearest and the dearest, rather than with the man you casually meet upon the street. If you do not, you are losing something, and experience tells you that you have lost much, whether you ever think about it or not. It is trifles at home that make happiness or unhappiness. Great tragedies usually begin in little things. A husband and a wife are drifting apart; each of them knows it, neither blames himself or herself. It is little things that cause the breach; by-and-bye the great scandal comes out, and the whole community knows; but there may have been a lifetime of agony before that, which surely need never have been, if what we say and sing in the house of God represented the very truth about ourselves. Our first

interest and solicitude are for those who are given to our stewardship, and God makes no mistake. What we call incompatibilities often are simply the result of a subtle selfishness, which in keeping the letter of the law forgets the minor things, which brings in a little selfhood by a back door. People may be close together at the fireside, eat at the same table, frequent the same scenes, live in each other's company day after day, and be as far apart as though oceans rolled between. If those who are dearest become to you commonplace and uninteresting, there is something the matter with your vision, and it matters little how high you stand in the religious world, what eloquent sermons you may preach, how much good you may philanthropically do, if these who are committed to your charge do not see in your demeanour the good tidings of the love of God.

This, again, is a cause, I believe, why so often children of good men go wrong. God forbid that I should say it is always the reason; often there is no telling why a good man has a bad son, but yet I think it is more frequently apparently than really inexplicable.

Let me give you a case in point. A young man comes into the vestry (there have been a good many of them), and tells me, a perfect stranger, a story of suffering or of shadow or of sin. When I have heard it, I ask him about his home. Yes, he has a father and a mother. "Why did you not tell your father, then?" "Oh, he is the last person in the world that I would tell!" "Why? Are you afraid of hurting him?" "No, it is not that; it is that I could never get near enough to him to tell him such a thing as

this." That is more common than you would suppose, and it is so in the household of good men. The minor offence in the father's nature has been a subtle self-hood which has erected a barrier between himself and his boy. When the boy goes wrong, all the world pities the father; but the father might have avoided that if he had remembered to give himself in sympathetic companionship to his son. Never lose the confidence of your children; you never need to lose it. I believe that most lads are kept right rather by influence than by precept. Boys who are living in the metropolis, far away from home, will bear me out in saying that if they have been kept from the house of shame it has probably been owing to the influence of some good mother, who has never spoken a word about, and perhaps knows not of the existence of, these darksome themes of ill. If the influence of a sympathetic parental companionship will not keep a young man right, I know no influence that will.

Observe, again, how often young people in their turn, conscious of religious instincts, desires, and aspirations, vitiate them all by a kind of self-consciousness that takes no account of what it really is. A young person comes to me or writes me a letter asking for advice upon this thing or that; very often it turns out to be a question concerning some fundamental of religion. I say, "Have you no friend with whom to talk these matters over?" "Oh, no, I am entirely alone, nobody at home understands me; I am often craving for sympathy and understanding, but I don't seem to get it." It is true, perhaps, in one case out of a hundred, that there is a noble lonely soul in an uncongenial environment struggling in vain against spiritual odds,

but the chances are ninety-nine out of the hundred that all that is the matter with that young man is a morbid self-consciousness and an over-estimate of his own importance. As Sir James Paget once said to a young man who wrote to him for professional advice, "Whatever you do, don't think yourself exceptional." There is no readier vitiator of youthful promise than self-consciousness of that kind which has but itself to blame for the ills of which it complains. Be yourself the strong one on whom the weak may lean, the sympathetic friend to whom your friends may look; stifle and dismiss your complaints, try and live in the spirit of the One who had a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathise.

Observe in all these regards the example of our blessed Lord. Nothing is more striking and impressive to me in the Christian Gospel than the tender delicacy of the Christ combined with a strength which is the acme of human manliness. Our Master was tender to the Magdalene, to the woman taken in adultery; scathing in his denunciation of the Pharisees who would have condemned them. We invert the order as a rule, we are indulgent to the Pharisee, denunciatory of the Magdalene. We have false standards concerning the importance and pre-eminence of certain virtues. I make no apology for the Magdalene; Christ never did that. He never condoned or compromised with or apologised for sin, but with Him it was a spirit that met with condemnation rather than an act. What is behind the conduct of a man, what makes him do or leave undone? was the question the Master would have asked. With all His tender delicacy, gentleness, and insight, He could be absolutely

irresistible and inflexible in His denunciation of wrong. Keep all your moral indignation if you like, provided you keep with it the tenderness of the spirit of the Master; and remember that if you have not the spirit of Christ you are none of His. The whole of your Christian character is vitiated in its heights and depths, its lengths and breadths, if that spirit be absent in your dealing with those who are nearest and dearest. If a man offends in one point he is guilty of all.

I am impressed, further, by the way in which this selfhood of which I have spoken operates in individual lives within or without the home circle, in self-pity, self-indulgence, unholy self-regard. A man spends a great deal of time frequently in thinking of himself. Self-consciousness, even when it seems harmless, is often poisonous. Self-contempt even, a craven submission to evil without or within, is as reprehensible as self-pity or self-indulgence in any other form. Men are continually crying out, "All is lost!" Why, all is found if you have but told the Lord you know how much is lost.

Further still, in our social life of to-day, I am amazed by the existence of two contradictory things—the vast amount of kindness which can be shown and the vast amount of cruelty that can be exhibited by the very same man. I go into a London club, and listen to men talking; it is pretty nearly always true that where two or three are gathered together slander is in the midst of them, and it is a bad time for somebody who is not there. Censoriousness is one of the most hateful of vices, and usually a man sees sooner the defects in another man's character than the blemish in his own. There is a psychological reason for that.

We are sometimes told that spiteful gossip is confined to one sex. I do not think it is, and I will venture to say that the most malicious gossips I have known were men. In point of fact, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness exist almost unrebuked in the characters of many otherwise religious people. Even those of the cloth are not exempt. The thoughtless cruelty of the statements which men make of one another, the ills that they wish, the ifs and the buts that they suggest, are unworthy of a Christian profession. More than that, remember, censoriousness has no place in Christian character. Our Lord's warnings were emphatic upon that point. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Not in some far-off day, but now, merciless judgments always recoil upon the man who makes them. It is perfectly certain that whilst the spirit of bitter and ungenerous criticism is in any man's heart the love of Christ is not there, and it is equally true that while criticism has its place and must have, and we are called upon to estimate the worth of a man's deeds, we do not belong to the Master when we seek to penetrate his motives. Let them alone.

Moreover, a very severe and real test of the genuineness of much of the criticism that goes on amongst men would be this: Supposing you could be satisfied that everything you pretend to deplore in another man's conduct was, after all, a mistake in your information, and that you had been entirely wrong, would your first instinct be rejoicing? Sometimes, yes; more frequently, no; you would be sorry to find out that

you were wrong. Is not this discovery enough to make you think with horror and alarm about your own condition? If a grudge like that lies at the bottom of your heart, then what you pretended to denounce was not the thing that was stirring your indignation at all. Moreover, when we speak about grudges, we speak about a somewhat that can enter by the back door and vitiate all the good to which a man puts his hand. A minor offence we call it. We do not ask a man to resign his church membership because he bears a grudge against someone else, but we would ask him not to be too prominent in Christian service if he failed to meet his creditors; and yet it is certain that the cherishing of a grudge is as much a sin against God as failing to pay twenty shillings in the pound.

“ Hard-heartedness dwells not with souls round whom Thine
arms are drawn,

And dark thoughts fade away in grace like cloud-spots in
the dawn.

I often see in my own thoughts, when they lie nearest Thee,
That the worst men I ever knew were better men than me.”

To be like unto our Master, and to be really in joyful communion with Him, to be the possessor of the peace of God, grudges must go. How many there are amongst us who have no real enjoyment of their Christian life! We pray and we sing, we attend much upon the services of the house of God, but we are never at harmony with ourselves; we wonder what is the matter, we speak about it, we ask for guidance of another, it may be.

Go down to the minor offence, the sin which does so easily beset, that which men do not see and do not

know, and perhaps do not reprobate; get rid of it; it means the driving out of one spirit by the incoming of another. Thomas à Kempis says in the "Imitatio," "When I consider what I am, then no man hath ever done wrong to me." I think I know what he meant: we have no right to cherish grudges, no right to feel ill-treated, no right to consider ourselves superior to another who has inflicted a wrong. For, when all is told, we have deserved far more of pain than we have ever got. God is merciful, but except we forgive men their trespasses His mercy is stayed from us. As I came up from Brighton one morning, I noted that the sun was shining brightly about halfway up the line. When we got near London it was gone. Am I to suppose that it has ceased to shine on the sea-coast? I do not believe it. I think London has sent up from her great heart greyish, blackish clouds, which obscure the face of the sun. Often when you complain of the absence of the peace of God and the sunlight of heaven in your soul, it is because you have generated affections which will not let the Holy Spirit through, you have placed between yourself and your Master barriers it needs repentance to remove. Let us get low down at the Cross of Christ, humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and He shall lift us up. See with a new sympathy the kinship of humanity everywhere, feel its heartbeat, get to the undercurrent where we are all divine. Respect the sacredness of another's soul; look with new eyes upon mankind, the eyes of Jesus, for, as Whittier has as sweetly said as the Faber whom I just now quoted:

"He prayeth best who leaves unguessed
The mystery of another's breast.

Why cheeks are pale, why eyes o'erflow,
Or heads are white, thou needst not know.
Enough to note by many a sign
That every heart hath needs like thine."

There is no time surely for adding to the world's pain; life is short at the best, and when the discipline is over we do not want to think as we stand at the parting of the veil that we have made it harder for another to fight his battle and to win his way through. Get the right spirit yourself, and you are working for the Christ, though you do not know it; and if your spirit be wrong you may claim all the virtues in the calendar, but you do not belong to the Master who hath called us to possess the heart of a little child. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "For out of the heart proceed the issues of life."

XXI

VISION AND SERVICE

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord . . . then said I, Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me . . . and said . . . thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, Here am I ; send me.—Isaiah vi. 1, 5, 6, 7, 8.

IN this chapter we have the account of the beginnings of a great prophetic ministry which has profoundly influenced the world. Of what nature the vision of Isaiah might have been we are hardly justified in attempting to speculate. That it was mainly subjective and symbolical is perfectly clear from the narrative itself, but it was a vision corresponding to an objective reality, which would have been there, whether Isaiah had known it or not, and which always is, whether the world knows it or not.

“ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord.” This vision is by no means unique in religious history, and especially in Christian history. I need hardly bring to your recollection the vision of St. Paul, the vision of St. Francis, the vision of Wesley, the vision of Charles Spurgeon and of Catherine Booth. Men must see before they can say, and in this crisis of an

experience—an experience not peculiar to Isaiah—we see something and know something which holds good of prophetic spiritual experience for all time.

This was a time of great national crisis. The king was dead. The prophet-statesman was musing sadly about the future. What now? Amid a people, some of them degraded, indisposed for high and holy things, darkness gathering around the national destiny, the great soul of Isaiah was perturbed—and yet, in this moment of deep darkness, the vision comes. How, we are not told, nor how long it stayed; but “in the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord,” the King, the Lord of Hosts. But the vision at first brought no comfort; rather was Isaiah trembling and afraid. It becomes no man to rush lightly and irreverently into the presence of God, and no man who has ever had a deep and profound consciousness of that presence Divine ever can speak of it as though it were all sweetness, and there were nothing of which to stand in awe. This is true of the saint, let alone of the sinner; and at that moment, when the vision came, Isaiah was no saint—“Woe is me, for I am undone. . . . For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” Then comes the symbolical cleansing. I see by your faces as I speak that some of you know well this spiritual pathway, the sense of awe and dread in the presence of God, the discovery of joy and peace and assurance in that same presence Divine, the fruit of a cleansing. However, that cleansing came. Isaiah was sure that it had come, and hence, when the call was given in the moment that followed, he whose iniquity had been taken away, and whose sin purged,

could say, as a sinner, volunteering for service among sinners, "Here am I; send me."

There, brethren, is the sequence of the spiritual experience, which was the beginning of all great missionary endeavour; and at the beginning of all great missionary movements, all great evangelical enthusiasm, there is such experience as this. To come from Isaiah's time and experience to our own, and to the day in which we live, and to the country whose citizens we are, and to the subject. Let me say at once, and abruptly, that the present state of foreign missionary endeavour is one which, while it gives us much cause for joy and thanksgiving to God, also should arouse in us much heart-searching, and cause something of disquiet. I know not what your missionary report of this year may be; I know not for what total of results you have to praise our Father in heaven; but I know the Society in which I am most immediately concerned and interested, and I feel that at the present time the evangelical churches of this country have much cause for introspection and for self-reproach that things are not as they ought to be. Criticism assails us from without, even in the mission field itself. There is, we are assured, in some quarters, in spite of our grand total of results, and in spite of the noble and disinterested services of many of those who go out from our churches to the mission field, a declining interest in the foreign missionary question as a whole. Nor is this true merely of the general public, and of those who are casually and loosely the adherents of our churches, and join with us in public worship. I fear we must say—and let us frankly face the fact—that some of those who are interested in our work at home, deeply con-

cerned in it, who profess and call themselves Christians, who believe that they have a personal relationship to Christ, are beginning to discourage our missionary effort abroad. They say that our methods are not suited to the heathen; that it were better that we revise them; perhaps better that we evangelise at home before we venture abroad at all. In a word, all the old arguments which William Carey and such as he heard a century and a half ago.

My brethren, where there is no argument there is a strange and serious apathy creeping over many of the members of our churches. They not only say nothing about foreign missions, they do nothing for them. And lastly, I think we are justified in saying that while it is not always true that we ought to blame the ministers for want of interest in any noble subject on the part of their people, yet perhaps among the ministers themselves some subjects are nearer to their hearts and some interests occupy a larger place in their affections than that of going into all the world and preaching the Gospel of the grace of God.

I am perfectly sure of this, that if the Church of Christ as a whole had ever fallen into this way of looking at the great question which is ours this morning, then the Church would have been doomed. She has saved herself by revivals of missionary interest and missionary effort from century to century. The living Church is a missionary Church; the Church which ceases to be a missionary Church is dead. But I think this apathy or declining interest, call it what you will, in this country to-day, in the question of foreign missions, is rather a symptom of something which lies deeper than we have actually im-

agined, and is itself a main current or cause of action or inaction. I think the whole country over, the time has come for us to wait upon God for a great revival of His work at home, and for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God, that we may one and all become missionaries, whether here or in the foreign field.

We have passed through, shall I say in the last twenty years, a period of criticism and negation, in which all the fundamentals of the Christian faith have gone into the melting-pot; in which, as it seemed, men's mood toward the eternal verities has been one of hesitation and uncertainty; an atmosphere fatal to enthusiasm. When preachers take to balancing evidence in the pulpit for this fact or for that, facts which vitally concern our Christian experience; when we are afraid of fervour and enthusiasm; when we are anxious not to make ourselves ridiculous by committing ourselves too strongly to the great facts of Christian faith; when the note of authority and holy experience is missing; then it is time to look to ourselves, ministers and people. We have passed through such a period as this, and I believe—and I think I am right in believing—that it is coming to an end. The time has been when the note of spiritual experience was more strongly sounded from the pulpit than it is just now. Sometimes it is falsely sounded; I think I have heard it so. If there has been one note which Methodism has sounded more clearly than any other evangelical body, it has been the note of holy fervour, enthusiastic sincerity. You may have been weak in some other directions, but, from the day when your first lay preachers went forth, that has been a note which has drawn men into the Kingdom in

multitudes, and always will. If that note is lost, or if it is more quaveringly sounded to-day, I pray the Lord to give it you back again! The truth is that we are ashamed sometimes of committing ourselves too strongly to the advocacy of the things which, if they be true, are the only things worth preaching about at all, and if they be untrue we had better shut up our churches and be done with it all.

There are certain things that I would like to place before you, apart from all questions of criticism, all questions about Christian evidences of any sort—things that human nature always wants to hear about, and always will, in this country or in any other. These are suggested in my text, and of them I may instance two. The first is the necessity for vision of God, and the second is the renewal of the fellowship of the cleansing.

I. THE NECESSITY FOR VISION OF GOD

When I speak about vision of God, I speak of that which human nature everywhere, even when it negates, is, consciously or sub-consciously, craving for. We are told that our churches are emptying to-day, and, according to statistics recently published, it might seem as if in the great Metropolis this were in a measure true, and Methodism itself is not exempt from the general trend. But I would have you to note that where any man is sure of his own experience, and speaks it in words which betray no superficiality in attainment; when a man speaks from the depths of him about the eternal realities, people will come to hear, be he eloquent or no. It is perfectly sure that the restless craving of the human heart—a craving which will never be

stilled without God—is in our midst to-day as much as it ever was; and what the people need is vision of God. Where there is no vision the people perish. That vision has been stated in words that are nobler than any I can employ to you this morning, by a great poet who sprang from the ranks of Nonconformity in the last century:

“ I have always had one lode-star ; now,
As I look back, I see that I have halted
Or hastened as I looked towards that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God.”

And, as a cynic in the van of the world put it not more than a generation back, after a crisis which in a fashion might be compared with that of Isaiah, “ There is God—what God?” It is not the God of philosophy that we want, though there is such a God; it is not the God of science that men crave to know, though there is such a God, who holds the world in the hollow of His hand; it is the God who is the Soul of our soul, the Life of our lives, the Father of our spirits. “ A need, a trust, a yearning after God.” Men’s desire is for such a God as this—Master, Saviour, Father, Friend. The world, and England, and the people to whom you and I commonly speak, are one and all, in whatever way they express their craving, seeking for vision of such a God. The vision which has come to men who have stood upon the mountain-top century after century in Christian history is the vision which I seek should be given afresh to us to-day. The disciples in the upper room had such vision granted, and it was not the vision of the bodily presence only, merely, or even chiefly, which changed them into heroes and saints; it was simply that they knew whom they had

believed—the Jesus who stood in the midst. The vision of God which has brought to Christendom all the light and love and joy in which we are living to-day was vision of God through Jesus Christ. A few timid fishermen meeting in an upper room, huddled by themselves for fear of the Jews, with the door fast shut between them and danger, on the morrow become heroes, valiant in the fight, who stand unabashed before princes and kings, and witness in the name of the Crucified. What wrought the change? Whence came the miracle? Why the three thousand added to the Church on the day of the Pentecost? It was the fruit of a vision of God which was the first vision of Jesus. That vision, testified to by the Holy Spirit down the ages, has reached us this morning by a magnificent apostolic succession. God has never left Himself without a witness; men have had vision of Jesus, hence vision of the Father. Men have that vision to-day—God grant us more! St. Paul on his way to Damascus sees a vision none other but himself could see, and hears a voice remonstrate with him upon his ways, and his response to the question addressed to him then, to the call which came to him in that moment of crisis, has affected your life and mine far more than we know. There was a man whose whole life was given up to an ideal because of a vision he had seen and knew, and giving his account of his own commission, even by way of remonstrance, he phrased it so: “Am not I an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ?” Renan, in writing his well-known “Life of St. Paul,” somewhere says, in words that have become familiar, concerning the uncertainty that envelops the end of the great apostle of the Gentiles, “Convinced

that he had given his life for a dream, Paul may have wandered, despairing, resigned, on some Iberian shore, aware of the nothingness of life." Thank God that with a certain inwardness we can read in the letters that came from a burning experience, such testimony as this: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. I am now ready to be offered." There was the fruit of a vision of God, precious and near, compelling and tender; it made the Apostle of the Gentiles the instrument of an evangel which has reached us in this church this morning. We are the fruit of such a vision, and it is ours to pass it on.

Time would fail me to speak of the instances in which vision of God has transformed comparatively humble lives, and magnified personality, given a new colour to life, a new authority to holy endeavour. Perhaps one might be pardoned for being so intimately personal as to say, however much one may be sure of the reality of other experiences, one can always be more sure of one's own. Will you allow the man who speaks to you this morning as a brother to say, "I, too, have seen the Lord"? and, as Cardinal Newman said of himself, I would be more sure of the vision than that I have hands and feet. Whatever appearances may be to-day, whatever may be the religious outlook, however serious may seem the deadening apathy which we are assured has stolen over the spiritual natures of our countrymen, this I believe, that if we can only multiply the number of those who have vision of God, however humble may be their power, however restricted their sphere, the future of the Church, the future of the nation, and the future of the cause of Christ in the mis-

sion field is perfectly safe. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord."

II. THE RENEWAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CLEANSING

That leads me to the second experience of which I spoke, and here I confess I have come to something which it is difficult to state as it should be stated—the fellowship of the cleansing. We are sometimes told that the sense of sin is dying or dead. Don't you believe it; it is not true. But I have discovered a curious fact—that the sense of sin can exist without much of the sense of God. I know men to-day, wretched, miserable, blind, for whom life has lost its whole value; they know nothing of God, doubt whether, or deny, there is a God; but they know sin, and they know that sin has been conqueror in their nature, and that they are paying a heavy price for the victory which sin has gained. When you meet with people whose lives have been comparatively smooth, as you do in your churches, and hear them say that they cannot understand the extravagant language of gratitude in which some Christians indulge for their experience of God's pardoning love, ask them to come and study human nature in its agony. You will find that the dual burden of sorrow and sin is universal; sooner or later, it comes to every man with poignancy, and, sooner or later, the craving goes up, the cry to which there is no satisfaction but Christ—"What shall I do to be saved?" They tell me that missionaries going to the foreign field sometimes have to create a conscience in their hearers; better say, they have to interpret to their hearers what

conscience has already said. Down in the depths of a man there is a question continually being asked, a question concerning the meaning of life, the burden of sorrow, escape from wrong. I never met a man yet of whom it would not be true to say that he has, however inadequate and however much it needs to be illumined by the Holy Spirit, such sense of sin as would, if you could truly state it, bring him to the Cross in humility, contrition, and penitence of heart. I know nothing to meet this experience save the Gospel, which, for 1900 years, has been preached by those who had the vision, and as we are trying to preach it to-day. Brethren, if the accent of conviction is lost or feeble, let us have that back again. The stronger and more vivid the experience of the fellowship of the cleansing the more powerful will be our message, our Gospel.

Sometimes I have been told, again, that men will refuse to believe in forgiveness, and I think that is true. In this great city I know not one, nor two, nor three who will accept a kind of fatalistic philosophy of life—believe that once the great mistake has been made, once the terrible surrender to evil has been made, there is no deliverance; a man must lie on the bed he has prepared for himself, must dree his own weird, must wait until the last dread enemy comes, and sin and sorrow are forgotten in the grave. You will meet this around you, and sometimes it fails to find its message in the pulpit; but the only answer to the experience is the Cross. And wait—never be in too great a hurry to explain the Cross. It is the truest thing in human nature; it strikes to the deepest part of human experience. You never will state in terms of the human intellect the deepest things of the heart. To explain

the Cross were impossible; you would have to comprehend eternity. But to feel the power of the Cross is possible; nay, the power of the cleansing, the new fellowship, the risen life are made possible by the introduction of the human heart to the passion of God, and in Christ and Him crucified we reach that point.

I wonder if you will bear with me, or understand precisely what I mean, if I attempt a somewhat mystical utterance. To get where I am pointing you now, you have to stand beneath even the experience of gratitude for God's pardoning love. There is something deeper than gratitude in the fellowship of the cleansing. I can't say what it is—nobody can—but the thing which the sinner dreads before the touch of the Cross comes to him he ceases to dread any more; he fronts eternity unblanched. Like St. Paul, he knows what it is to say, in the fellowship of the cleansing, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" We cleave to the soul of the Redeemer; the passion to be redeemers comes over us. Down below mere gratitude for Jesus there is a fellowship with Jesus Himself, and not the Jesus of the sunshine only, but the Jesus of the shadow, the Jesus of the deepest things, the Jesus who ministers to the woe of the human heart. In the fellowship of the cleansing, the fellowship of the Cross, the missionary is born; and, brethren, I don't believe there is any other way of making a missionary. Societies will not do it; well-organised collections will not do it, philanthropy is no substitute for it. The only missionary motive in which I have much belief at all is urgent, compelling, overwhelming love to Jesus, born of the fellowship of the cleansing, the fellowship of the depths with God.

But for Calvary we could never have had it; but for the Cross we should not know what it means. The Cross of Christ in our experience become the dynamic of missionary endeavour.

I was once in a company where a minister was speaking about what he called the New, or Social, Gospel. Well, I believed him. Quite true, we need it; we are to blame for not preaching it sooner. But he said it was the whole Gospel; he said, "I believe that our Lord is well pleased by those who offer Him little or no devoutness, who are not sure about the claims of the Christ, and especially the dogma of the Atonement, but who are serving to the best of their ability their brother men." I felt it was superficial, though the whole room was against me; and I felt it because I think our friend began at the wrong end. Philanthropy itself is a feeble, pulseless thing unless it has been born of the Cross, and the indirect effects of the evangel of the Cross are responsible for most of the so-called philanthropic endeavour of the day, against which I would not speak one word of contempt, but which sees no need of an evangel to preach. No, no. The brotherhood which is worthy of the name, the evangelic impulse which alone can save humanity, begins in the fellowship of the cleansing. We have vision of the Holy; we have repentance toward God; we have the assurance of sin forgiven; we have the inflow of the Spirit; we have that new relationship, which the world can neither give nor take away, with Him who agonised upon Calvary; and, with that in our hearts, with that motive in our minds, with that strength in our endeavours, we go forth in confidence. Missionary or preacher was never made in any other way. We speak to the deep

things in mankind when we have first been to the side of the Christ. It was this that made John Wesley say, "The whole world is my parish." It was this that compelled St. Francis Xavier to the urgent missionary utterance, as, with arms outstretched, he sailed for India, "More sufferings, more sufferings, Lord!" It was this that came to the Moravian who cried to his countrymen:

"I hear a voice you cannot hear,
Which bids me not to stay;
I see a hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me away."

If there were no humanity to save, none but our own, yours and mine, the fellowship of the cleansing would still be ours; but we would be seeking for something to do to express to the Christ our sense of what that fellowship had brought.

Two sisters brought this fact home to me within a few hours of the time in which I heard the minister whom I have just quoted speak. One was weak, suffering, dying, though the other did not know it at the time. The one who was watching by the bedside said, "It seems dreadful to be so helpless, to feel I can do so little to assuage the suffering of the dear one. I can do nothing whatever. If I only could do something, that hurts, hurts me, I think I should feel better, to let my love out." I know what she meant quite well—to let the love out. The love that we bear the dear Redeemer compels us to see the Divine in mankind. There is a sweet and holy sympathy born of that urgent desire to let the love out which was born in the fellowship of the cleansing. The love of Christ constrains us.

Brethren, the last word I would leave with you is this: Consider little about ways and means; consider little about faulty methods; consider much whether we do not need once more vision of God in the face of Him whose visage was marred more than the face of any man; and whether we do not need a renewal of that holy fellowship which begins at Calvary. May we feel as the Apostle of old felt and said—Paul, the aged—“For me to live is Christ—is Christ.” If so, when the Master’s call comes, as to the consecrated heart it always comes, we shall say with that prophet of old, “Here am I; send me.”

XXII

THE PROPHET IN PRAYER *

I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.—Gen. xxxii. 26.

God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.—1 Sam. xii. 23.

MAY I venture to speak principally to my brother ministers, and not as a censor, but as a brother, from the subject of the Prophet in Prayer? In these two striking passages, the utterance of patriarch and prophet, we have a source of inspiration, a mark for our guidance, and a subject for heart-searching. Here are two strongly contrasted crises of spiritual experience, the experience of the servant of God in all time. Let us compare them a little more closely.

In the first the patriarch Jacob is before us, an erring, sinning, suffering man. He has been for a generation an exile from his father's house, dwelling amongst strangers. He is the possessor of a heritage obtained by fraud, and it has profited him nothing. As George Eliot says, "It was not worth doing wrong for; nothing ever is in this world." After the lapse of so many years, one might have thought that his sin was expiated, and the very memory of it wiped out. We have no record of the way in which it affected him—

* Preached to the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, in the Dome, Brighton, on Tuesday evening, March 10, 1903.

self, it is not recalled in the pages of the book in which we have read. Great changes have taken place since the sin was committed. Jacob is no longer alone. With his staff he passed over Jordan; now he has become two bands. He is returning to the land of his fathers, but right across his path comes a reminder of the day of his guilt. The shadow of retribution is over him; Esau, his brother, from whom he has nothing to expect but vengeance, is coming to meet him with a strength greater than his own. Then the memory of the past awakens in the breast of this man, and not for himself only is he anxious now. He could bear the worst that his brother could inflict, were it not that he is father and master, he has a household to think of; not to himself does he stand or fall, but if he be punished some should be smitten whom he holds dearer than his own life. He tries every means to propitiate his brother. He has but little hope of succeeding, so he falls to praying. Alone he wrestles till the breaking of the day. But in that dark vigil Esau was vanquished before the meeting took place; the sinner became triumphant; he had saved not only himself, but those he prayed for when he prayed for himself, for true penitence, let me say, always contains an intercessory element. If a man prays for forgiveness for himself alone, and if selfishness be the most prominent feature in his prayer, his penitence is false. Jacob wrestled till the breaking of the day with breaking heart because of his dread for his own. He was thinking of the wife and the little ones behind him, and that was the reason he was so urgent, and beat against the breast of God, saying, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." And

the blessing came; that sinful, suffering, erstwhile mean-spirited trickster becomes the prince who has power with God and with men, and has prevailed.

In short contrast with this is the case of the prophet Samuel. Here is one whose own account of himself you have read in the pages of God's word, who from his childhood upward had served the Lord. He has had no interest of his own; the people of Israel have been his flock, his children, his very life. We see him now in the hour of his failure. All his efforts are fruitless, his entreaties have gone for nothing, his labours are returned upon him empty. A rebellious and ungrateful people stand upon the one side, and the prophet and his God stand upon the other. Now it is his duty, stern and hard, to denounce them and warn them of the terrors of the law. It is a sublime moment in his life, but it is a question whether the prophet saw its sublimity—has any prophet ever seen the sublimity of the supreme moment of his life? Here speaks one who had no interest of his own to serve. He had forgotten himself in solicitude for his people, and yet he had failed—failed. And as he warns them of a wrath to come, and they plead with him to entreat with God, "Pray for us that we die not," we can almost see his demeanour as he answers, "Pray for you? All my life has been given to you; I have laboured for you, and laboured in vain. But God forbid that I should cease to pray."

Here, then, in these two utterances we have compassed for us the extremes of experience, the experience of every servant of God to whom souls are committed in trust. And I venture to say that you must be Jacob before you can be Samuel, and the prayer of penitence

of the man who has got as low as he can in pleading with God for his own soul, the prayer of penitence is like unto the prayer of the prophet, who stands between God and the souls of other men as a mediator. Here, then, we have two things: we have the sinner become the prince, we have the mediatorship of the prophet.

The greatest need of the present day is the need of stewards of the mysteries of God. We have ministers of Christ in abundance, faithful ministers, honest and true, but we have not many stewards of the deep things. We have practical men, public servants, leaders of thought, champions of the faith, but not many men with a vision of things unseen. We have been warned sometimes that the multitude is deserting the house of God. The statistics published recently have alarmed many of you. It may be that their significance is somewhat exaggerated; nevertheless, they give us cause for some searching of heart. Can we be complacent if the great mass of our countrymen remain outside the radius of organised Christianity and care nothing for the public worship of the Lord's Day or the message of him who preaches the good tidings of great joy? We occupy ourselves earnestly about other things, we must needs think about this thing.

Again, it is true that in many cases the pew sits in judgment on the pulpit, and we are warned that the day of the pulpit is over, that now the prophet speaks by the printed page rather than by the living word. If so, some of us are arraigned at the bar of God. It ought never to be so. The living man, speaking the living word, will always take precedence of the printed page, unless that page be the Holy Book. Again, how often we ourselves have felt—I speak as a hearer now

—when we have entered a place of worship, that the man in the pulpit might have been living on another planet; he never comes near to my life, he is speaking in an unknown tongue. He has nothing to give me, and yet he himself is hungry, and if he were in the pew he would know when the bread of life was given to him to eat. How often it seems as though the preacher is trifling with the souls before him! His sermon has cost him infinite pains; how long it may have taken him to build it no one but himself can tell, and yet somehow, when this sermon, built with so much labour, so much self-sacrificing toil, is presented to the people, they turn away indifferent. He does not speak with the prophet's voice, who uses the words of Holy Writ. How often it seems, again, as though those who are listening to us missed in our voice the accent of conviction. I know of nothing more awful than the position of a preacher who for daily bread declares Sunday after Sunday truths that do not spring out of the depths of his own experience, truths which he only half believes, or does not perhaps believe at all. I have been told that men are placed in this position, and one is almost compelled to believe it, that they go on talking when their own hearts are dry, because of the wife and the children at home who must be fed. But if ever a man was placed in a Gethsemane, surely it is the man placed in a position like that.

Then, again, the note of authority is missing. We want it back—the note of spiritual certainty. Was it not Dr. Clifford who said the shadow of the priest is upon the land? Why, Doctor? It is because the prophet is so seldom seen; and, brethren, it is indubitable that wherever the prophet stands the priest has little

power. Why do people turn to the priest? Why do we find it necessary to denounce priestcraft, and to try to stand between the children and the confessor who would claim their souls? It is because people long for the ring of certainty, for the voice of authority, and if the prophet is not there to give it in the accent of conviction they will turn to the priest, with his spurious claims; but where the prophet stands forth with tongue and heart of fire the priest they will not endure. Where can this accent of authority come from? It must come from the living experience of the prophet himself. When we dare to stand up to speak about the deep things of God, we must be sure that we know them, and to know them we must begin at the bottom and not at the top. The true prophet will never dare to speak down. Having been down, he stays there in the valley of humiliation, that he may help souls who find themselves in the same place. How often it is that a man comes to us—shall I say often?—but how has it been when a man comes to us with a broken heart and a burden of guilt and a lurid past, and an awful fact in his life with which we cannot deal? And we have nothing to tell him, and nothing to give. “Oh,” you say, “we have.” But you have not; for he comes away again, and says you have not helped him. Speaking from experience I can say with humiliation, no pain in my ministry has been so great as the pain of failure to bind up a broken heart, and to heal a moral wound. Was there something that one did not know? In Dr. Fairbairn’s last book, “The Philosophy of the Christian Religion”—a profound but beautifully human book, such as only a spiritual scholar could write—there is an instance given of this. That great

thinker and master of the Free Churches of this country says he once knew a man of great promise, of unmistakable genius, of powers from which everybody expected much, who had acquitted himself to the satisfaction of his professors and his fellows in class before he went out to tell the great world the message of his Master. But the first time he stood up in a pulpit, and saw before him the men who were really living life, and the women who were bearing burdens, a sense of the overwhelming horror of it, of the little man can ever do to cope with the forces of evil, with the deep sorrow for which there appeared to be no remedy that he knew of, he was struck dumb, he had nothing to say; but he silently declared to God that if he escaped from that awful place he would never lift up his voice again until he had something to tell about a mystery behind the mystery—good tidings to save. And, brethren, he never did speak as a prophet again—silenced by the problem of human sorrow. When I read that passage I felt a great dread grip my heart, the dread lest one had been unfaithful, even unconsciously, by treading on the surface of things, unconscious of the depths below; and the question was asked and answered, Do I know the deep things of God, or am I only prattling about them, as I stand face to face with sinning, suffering men? We must know before conviction and authority become part of our message, and men are won.

And, brethren, we can only know by doing as Jacob did. We may have served for a generation, and thought we were doing well, that we could claim the promise of God to make us a multitude; but the day comes, perhaps, when we find ourselves stripped of

illusions, and face to face with the bare facts of life. Then woe to our souls if we trifle! Would we deal with sinners, we must know something of the mystery of the Cross. It is not sympathy that is wanted in the pulpit; at any rate, not chiefly sympathy. Sympathy may be a counsel of despair. What is wanted is identity of experience with the men to whom you would speak. If a man comes with a burden of sin, are you a man who said and knew what you meant when you said, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? We may learn something from the silences of the pulpit, and I fear often that the accent of conviction is wanting in the message of redemption, because the prophet has not been himself redeemed. Brethren, we have to get into the depths here, and it is only done in the vigil of the darkness, and the wrestling to the break of day. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" sometimes means, God show me my sin and the way out, and then give me to point that way.

" Beneath the Cross of Jesus
 I fain would take my stand,
 The shadow of a mighty rock
 Within a weary land :
 A home within the wilderness,
 A rest upon the way,
 From the burning of the noontide heat,
 And the burden of the day.

" I take Thy Cross, O Saviour,
 For my abiding place,
 I ask no other sunshine
 Than the sunshine of Thy face ;
 Content to let the world go by,
 To know no gain or loss,
 My sinful self my only shame,
 My glory all the Cross."

You may learn that late in life, but learn it you must before you will speak to sinful men with the power of a Spurgeon or a Parker. We must get down before we get up, be like unto the sinner that we may remain beside him all the days of our life.

Then it seems to me that the note of communion is largely absent to-day. Our fathers had it—have we lost it? There never was a time more fruitful in Christian efforts than to-day; there never was a time of greater activity, never so many conventions, demonstrations, federations, congresses, and what not. But there was an old type of evangelical life, a solitary and a self-sufficient type, which did not, and could not, tell all it knew; no, not to the nearest and the dearest; a time when men waited upon God, not always begging and beseeching, but communing. Our fathers may have been short of something, but they were right in having that. To be powerful with God you must remain with Him. And to-day is the result of our activity commensurate with the energy put forth? If not, it might pay us to withdraw from a little of it, and get into the holy place, and be alone till the breaking of the day, till we can wrench a blessing, as it were, from the unwilling hands of God. Sometimes God makes the giving of His greatest blessings hard, and when we have got them we are glad that it was so. Jacob wrestled as for life and death, praying for his own soul because he knew that with his personality was bound up the spiritual destiny of others. The worst punishment that ever falls upon guilt is the punishment which is borne by the innocent in the sight of the guilty. And no man falleth to himself; therefore, by what we are not, some suffer, as by what we

are, some gain. Into the holy place! With violence, heavenly violence, take the kingdom by force. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The prophet's mediatorship is of many kinds. It is a loneliness. All prophets are lonely. There is something that this assembly will not do for you, brethren, not for any of you. You will go back as lonely in the deepest things as when you came here. If from the word that is so feebly spoken from this platform to-night you are getting good you will never be able to tell to the preacher himself what good; you will feel as though he were thrust out of the operation, and God laid a grip upon your soul. There is an immediacy in spirituality, if it is to have value, and that is purchased at a price.

Mark the contrast between Samuel and Jacob. Jacob stood between his people and the consequences of his sin; Samuel stood between his people and the consequences of theirs. When once you have known what true repentance means, when once the burden of souls is laid upon you, you will often play the part of Samuel, you will be thrusting yourself between your people and their own sin and the suffering that comes therefrom. Here is the spirit of prophecy which merges it in priesthood. Never be afraid of the spurious priest; if you have the mediatorship of the prophet you will be laid upon the altar of sacrifice, counting not the cost for love of God and sympathy for men. As Samuel wrought, so will you. For, if you have ever been into the holy place bearing your own sins before God, you will know the way again for sins that are not yours.

What things matter most? Let the sincerity of our Christian activity show. It is the souls of

men that matter most. The soul of one little child is of more importance to the great scheme of things and the Master of them than any council of state or international treaty. The things that matter are souls. But how few know to-day what it is to travail for a soul! We feel an interest in men, and an interest in sermons; we have a great deal to say, and we say it with earnestness; but often it does not matter much when the saying is over what becomes of the souls to whom it was said. Oh, brethren, if we can just alter that, England will be stirred to the heart and centre before the twentieth century has gone far. We are pleading for a revival of spiritual religion in the nation. I care not what form it may take; it all depends upon the prophet's prayer, the prophet's mediation, whether there be a revival at all.

Some of you have read, perhaps all of you have read, Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame." The most harrowing scene in that book comes near the end, and I confess without shame that I did not sleep for two nights after I had read it. It is the scene in which the most interesting character in the book, a fair young girl, is put to death as a witch after she had just met and discovered her mother. It would be too long to quote it, I shall not try. This fair young girl is the victim of the filthy brutes who take away her life, though she was pure as a lily. That worst of monarchs, that superstitious devil, Louis the Eleventh, gave her to the gallows. The officer of the so-called law came to seek her, and an old hag to whom she fled for refuge would have given her up with cynicism and mocking laughter, but she discovered it was her own child, long lost. Ah!

how that mother changed. The divine in her woke up. Inch by inch and foot by foot she fought for her daughter's life, with talons and with tongue, with the storm of denunciation, and with the pleading eloquence of agony that melted the hearts of the executioners. And had it not been that their own life would have paid the forfeit they would have let their victim go. But it was all in vain. The daughter was hung, and her mother perished at the foot of the scaffold. She won—she won! “In death they were not divided,” and it may be that vicious old sot, whose life had been given to vice and to infamy, was saved in that moment of her death by her intercessory striving for her daughter's life. God give it to her in heaven.

I may be speaking to a man who knows a little about what that means; one who has fought with death for his boy. You lost that battle; that Prince of heaven prevailed against you, and your child is safe in the arms of Jesus. Can it teach you how to fight with hell for somebody else's boy? Ah! the eloquence born of experience! If you have been near to the mouth of the pit of destruction yourself, even in prayer; if you have wrestled till the break of day for the blessing without which prophecy is hypocrisy, you will know how to stand between God and your people, and plead for a life that is dearer to you than it is to themselves; and not to do it, not to do it is sin. Where is the point where the prophet's labours stop—with the sermon? Why, they don't even begin there. The sermon is made in the secret place. With the labours? The labours are of no use without the prayers. If you are mighty in prayer God will take care of your tongue. Brethren, let us take care to pray; in the holy of holies

be familiar with God, and you will be fearless before men. The pews sit in judgment on you, man of authority. Let the man tremble, let the prophet burn, scorch, and wither them. They will forget to sit in judgment on you. Even when they hate you they will know that you are true. Never keep anything back; declare the whole counsel of God as it is given to you. Never trouble with self-pity or strike the plaintive note. You who come from the outposts, who know what it is to suffer where there is no brotherly sympathy to help you, you are not alone; for if men forget, or never remember, still God is there—is there. And when labour is fruitless, still there is prayer. God forbid that we should sin against the law; for when labour is vain we have ceased to pray.

“ O power to do! O baffled will!

O prayer and action, ye are one.

Who may not strive may yet fulfil

The harder task of standing still,

And good but wished with God is done.”

XXIII

PASSIVE RESISTANCE *

I FEEL that we are face to face in educational matters and in the history of our Free Churches with a crisis even greater than that of 1870. It is probable that in after years our descendants will refer to the conflict which is now before us as having been the greatest crisis in the history of Nonconformity in modern times. It is not, I believe, the greatest crisis in the history of our Free Church principles in this country. The best, noblest, and most strenuous battle has been fought for us; others laboured, and we are entered into their labours. But Lord Rosebery has warned us—and he speaks with authority—that if we flinch at the present crisis, our power as Nonconformists and as a public force will be extinct. Whether his lordship is right or not time will determine, but I can assure him, if there be any need to assure him, that, whether he fails us or not, we shall not flinch at the present crisis. Our fathers never shirked a battle for the rights of conscience, neither will we. The conflict concerning passive resistance has already begun, and I am glad and proud that he who leads off upon the question at Oxford, Dr. Fairbairn, was our spokesman in the presence of Mr. Balfour, and framed and uttered the last sentence in our Nonconformist protest: “To the proposal to establish a Clerical majority in

* Preached in The City Temple, May 21, 1903.

the schools of the people we will not submit." The Education Act, just passed, and the London Education Bill, now before Parliament, are, as a well-known Anglican clergyman and member of the London School Board, has said, "brimful of iniquities." I might occupy the whole time at our disposal in denouncing the Act and the Bill from the point of view of a citizen. I might denounce it as an Educationist. I leave, for the moment, these points of view severely alone; I speak as a Nonconformist and a Christian.

This Act puts into the hands of Clerical managers the control of more than half the elementary schools of the country at the same moment that it places those schools entirely upon the rates. There is the crux of the whole question. Many people confess themselves unable to understand what the policy of Passive Resistance means. You now see the issue. We, as Nonconformists, are, for the first time, being compelled to pay directly (we have done it already, indirectly) for the maintenance of a form of religious belief which we not only conscientiously disapprove, but against which our very existence as Nonconformists is a standing protest. We are not Nonconformists for fun. I believe that on the other side in this controversy there are many who really do not understand what our position is. Presently I will read a letter from a clergyman for whom I have a great and sincere respect—so would you if I mentioned his name—in which it is shown, as clearly as can be, that many well-meaning men on the other side of this controversy misunderstand the very fundamentals of our position as Free Churchmen. We object to being compelled to pay for a form of religious instruction our protest

against which has led to our existence as Free Churchmen. This is a monstrous injustice, one in the presence of which we cannot afford to be mealy-mouthed, and concerning which we feel compelled to take the strongest possible stand, be the consequences what they may. A gentleman writing to the *Daily Chronicle* yesterday on the subject of the resolution passed by the Congregational Union a few nights ago said that "entire sympathy" does not mean entire approval. I think I ought at this point to enter a protest against a sentence of that kind. As plainly as men could say anything, the Congregational Union has voiced our Churches in saying that we have now been compelled to take our stand side by side with those who intend to adopt the policy of Passive Resistance. If that were not the meaning of the resolution passed on Monday night, then we are merely juggling and playing with words. A friend has told me that he would not have consented to the introduction of the words "entire sympathy" if they did not mean entire approval. I would warn the Government that they have now to face a practically homogeneous Nonconformity—half the religious life of the nation. As the Congregationalists spoke the other night, so the Baptists are speaking, so the vast majority of Methodists are speaking, so Presbyterians are speaking all over the land. "We are not divided, all one body we."

By passive resistance to the new Education Act we mean—and the struggle is now upon us—that we will put the Government to the trouble of collecting from us the new sectarian rate. Personally I intend to tender a portion of the Education Rate—that portion which is not sectarian—and, as I have said more than

once in public meetings on this question, we can make this issue perfectly clear to the general public. We will pay the people's rate, we will not pay the parson's rate. As the Clerical promoters of the Education Act know perfectly well, whoever appoints the teacher controls the school. A two-thirds majority upon the management means really the whole control. If you will invert that proportion, let two-thirds represent the public and one-third the so-called proprietors of the denominational schools, then, I believe, though we would still have much to complain of, our Nonconformist policy of Passive Resistance would fall to the ground. I do not represent anybody but myself, and I feel that if a two-thirds majority upon the management of denominational schools were granted to the public, to those who pay the rates, then I should no longer have much excuse for refusing my portion of that rate. Yet we would still have much to complain of; in the mere fact that there are denominational schools is something which we, as Nonconformists, exist to protest against. Our principle is this: It is not the business of the State to teach denominationalism at all. We are assured that we have no alternative to offer; supporters of the Government twit us with this, and say, "It is all very well to criticise; have you anything to propose?" We might say, "Leave things alone." But we won't do that. As the situation has arisen, we are prepared to deal with it. We have an alternative proposition. The alternative is, first, let the proprietors of denominational schools hand them over at a valuation. If you are not prepared for that, then use them for the ordinary work of your churches, and allow the education authority to hire them if it is

willing to do so. If not, do as Free Churchmen now do; keep them for the use of your churches, and that alone. Do not ask the State to enter and help you to maintain them, but allow the education authority to erect such schools as are needed. I am trying my very best to understand the position of such men as Lord Hugh Cecil, and I think I have got so far as to be able to thoroughly respect the motive of that noble lord. In his summons to us to join with him and his friends in a campaign against materialism, we naturally can feel some sympathy, for at the very moment when materialism, as a mode of thought, as a speculation, is dying or dead, materialism is tightening its grip upon our public and commercial life. Lord Hugh Cecil is perfectly right in saying Christians should close the ranks, fight against the common foe; but I claim, and would submit to his lordship, that he is taking a wrong method in his mode of meeting the difficulty. We Free Churchmen do not propose to ask the State to help us to fight materialism. We erect our schools and churches, and maintain them without any assistance from the national exchequer at all. We would repudiate such assistance if it came; we do not want it. We believe that the Cross of Christ, the appeal to the consciences of men, is best left to the voluntary efforts of those who believe in their Christian principles, and are prepared to pay for them. Mr. Balfour has said, and Mr. Chamberlain, in a less ingenuous way, has also said, that it is quite clear that the nation has declared for denominationalism in education. Both statesmen affect to demonstrate this by a reference to the fact that, whereas 3,000,000 children are being educated in the denominational schools, only

2,600,000 are being educated in the board schools. Mr. Balfour ought to know better than to say that this is a proof that the country prefers denominationalism, and Mr. Chamberlain does know better.

There are two very good outstanding reasons why those proportions are what they are. We prefer the cheapest thing as a rule, and the less efficient denominational schools have been cheaper for the last thirty years than the board schools, even although the compromise of 1870 has been gradually encroached upon until five-sixths of the cost of the former was, until the passing of the new Act, being defrayed out of the exchequer, and now with the exchequer grant and the rates together, the whole of that cost will be defrayed. Cheapness is one grand reason. Voluntary subscribers were drawn from every interest which felt it to be worth its while to keep out the school board. A second reason has been that, as the law now stands, where a denominational school holds the ground the board school must keep out, whether it likes it or not. With a fair field and no favour, you would soon find whether Englishmen prefer denominational to undenominational education.

Mr. Balfour has further urged upon Nonconformists to understand that the Government means fairly with them, and that under the new Act we can erect our denominational schools and put them upon the rates and taxes. We cannot do anything of the sort. When will he understand, when will statesmen generally understand, that we don't want State pay for our Nonconformist privileges? Here is a letter which was written to me by a gentleman, a clergyman of the Church of England. For the writer I have great re-

spect, he is a brother in Christ, and he writes like one; but you will see from the wording of this letter that Mr. Balfour is not alone in his misapprehension of our position; he says:

“I was present at the City Temple last Thursday, and heard you announce your intention of preaching on Thursday next on the subject of the Education Bill. I know you will permit me, as a brother minister, though of a different denomination from yours, to write a few lines upon this subject, upon which I have bestowed a great deal of thought. I write as knowing that you are a pronounced anti-rate-payment advocate. I am one who believes that this so-called ‘passive resistance’ is one of the darkest phases of ‘conscientious’ action which has menaced the Church and truth of God for many a day. . . . I know all the arguments on which it is supported, and as a Christian (though one who greatly cherishes the fellowship of every evangelical branch of the Church catholic) I naturally feel a little strongly on some points which I consider to be rather overlooked by Nonconformists. For instance:

“(1) The fact that the Church of England has, since 1870, gone on, uncomplainingly, paying the School Board rate, thus supporting a form of things (set on foot with a view to the overthrow of our schools) which we disapproved.”

If that gentleman be here now I would like to say to him, in the same friendly fashion in which he has written to me: That first point was scarcely worth your stating; it will hoist you with your own petard. Since 1870 the Board School system, which avowedly came into existence not to supplant but to supplement the

work which the denominational schools were already doing, has grown increasingly in public favour, just because it was neither Nonconformist nor Anglican. If it was set on foot with a view to the overthrow of your schools, what have you been doing in sitting upon School Boards at all? You have been there as much as we. You have controlled the policy in not a few cases, and, as has been pointed out again and again, the Board School is not a Nonconformist school, nor is undenominationalism Nonconformist education. Surely we profess in common the principles—shall we call them even principles?—the Bible knowledge which has been taught in Board Schools for thirty years, and taught with efficiency, as statistics prove. Dr. Clifford has said, “The Bible is not a Nonconformist book, unless you make it so.” The second point in the letter is:

“(2) That while paying these rates we have, by voluntary effort, strenuously and constantly maintained and developed our own elementary schools, with immense self-sacrifice, these thirty-two years, and thus, in all justice, have deserved to continue.”

I meet that point with the greatest respect. I know Anglicans, scores of them, who represent thousands whom I don't know, who do conscientiously pay for the maintenance of their schools because the principles of the Church of England are so dear to them. But you beg the question. The question is not that you have sacrificed for the maintenance of these schools, and that they deserve to continue; the question is, first, does the nation want them to continue? and, second, you have gained a great deal from the use of the word Voluntary for your schools, and so on. In reality, you

have been paying only one-sixth of the cost; the rest has been paid by Nonconformists in common with Churchmen through the national exchequer. We admit all your sacrifices. But our Nonconformist principle is that you should not seek to meddle with the appointment of the teachers, who are the national servants in this respect. If your principles are dear to you, do what you have done, erect your own schools, and keep them free. In practice, whatever we may think about it, the time has come when your denominationalism, about which I admit you ought to feel more in earnest than you do about the rule of three, ought to be kept from such complications as you have yourselves imposed. My correspondent further says:

“(3) That the Act of 1902 has preserved to us a minimum of such advantage as our ownership of more than half the elementary schools of the land pointed out as our due, vast concessions having been made to the opposition. . . . Had Nonconformists bestirred themselves years ago, and done anything adequate for the education of the country, they would now have their fair share of consideration and their due opportunity of training up their children day by day in their own forms of religious faith.”

You see, Mr. Balfour over again. When you, sir, have made one-half of the sacrifices and endured a tithe of the suffering which Nonconformists have made and endured for the sake of their principles, you can exhort us to sacrifice. During the thirty-two years we have erected churches and schools, though we have by no means such a wealthy constituency as you have. We have not gone cap in hand to the State for anything. In those schools our principles have been

taught under our own vine and fig tree, no man daring to make us afraid. And, mark this, it is often overlooked. If statistics prove anything at all, they prove that the Sunday-schools of the various churches are educating in religion the majority of the children of this country. Do not ask us to make sacrifices which mean that we must take State pay. Look at the sacrifices we have made in order that we might not take State pay.

Mr. Balfour, in genuine surprise, I think, has asked us to remember that in refusing to pay the rates now we are taking our stand too late. He says: "You have already been paying for the maintenance of a form of religious instruction in which you do not believe, but you paid through the taxes." Yes, quite right; but when you put the schools upon the rates we know a little better where we are. We can refuse just so much of the new rate as is for sectarian purposes pure and simple. Besides, the compromise of 1870 was not of our making; it was forced upon us, we submitted to it; for thirty-two years, under protest, we have continued to submit. But from your side you have encroached upon it little by little, until now no shred of it remains. And, were it not so, it would not matter much to me. I should say a point has been reached in the history of our Nonconformity, and in the injustice meted out to us, beyond which we shall bear no more. The whole question has been reopened, and we take our stand as educationists, as we have always done, in demanding, not a sectarian, but a national system—graded, efficient, unsectarian, State-controlled, locally administered by authorities elected "ad hoc." But according to some of our weaker-kneed brethren,

together with our conscientious opponent, you are performing an illegal action in refusing your rate. What is the difference between passive and active resistance, after all? Well, there is a big difference. If any of our brethren turned extremely obdurate, active resistance would mean that we should bolt and bar our windows and watch at the orifice with shot-guns. But we don't do that. When the rate-collector rings the bell we shall open the door; he shall come in and seize the hall clock, if we have one, and he shall take it out, and none of us will lay a hand upon it; we may even be in the crowd to buy it. Illegal—it may be so; I have seen a legal opinion to that effect. Lawless, my clerical correspondent calls the policy, making a dangerous precedent which may be followed by all kinds of extremists, Anarchists, and such, in the time to come. Well, we will take the risk. The moral sense of the country is with us, and it would not be with the Anarchists. Moreover, remember, we are not making a precedent. Our Nonconformist liberties have been won, as Dr. Parker was accustomed to say, at the spear-point. They have often been won by breaking the law, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." But when the things that are Cæsar's come into conflict with the things that are God's, one must go, and we know which. Supposing, then, it be illegal to refuse to pay the rate, then I will break the law. Remember that, in so doing, we have precedent which has established our Nonconformity, which I venture to say has established what is best in our nationality. John Bunyan went to Bedford Gaol because of the law that bade him stop preaching. He said: We ought to obey God rather than men. Cromwell instituted a

court which tried a king, and ended by cutting off his head; the king pleaded that there was no jurisdiction, it was an illegal act either to try or to condemn. But his head went off, and British liberties were safe.

I am one of those who believe that Nonconformity is now in a position to dictate terms, and the time may come when we shall have to dictate them to what is now His Majesty's Opposition.

The time has come to cut away this denominational question from the question of national education. We know exactly where we are, and what we have got to do. We are compelled to passive resistance, it is the equivalent left to us by the House of Lords upon the other side, and, if necessary, we will proceed to the solution of this national question over the ruins of the House of Lords. For the first time for many years the working men are on the same platform as the Nonconformists. Nonconformity and Labour together can make or unmake any Government, but if we are alone, if we had no Labour party, no Lord Rosebery, no Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, no Liberal Party at all to play fast and loose with us—for, remember, we all think it, we were not well represented in the House of Commons during the Education Debate, from the front benches, at any rate—if we had none of these, we will take our stand on the old platform of Nonconformist principle. It is a good thing that we have to fight again, it will put some backbone into us. Have no fear about the issue. May God defend the right!



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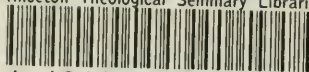
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